

# ANTI-PRAGMATISM

ALBERT SCHINZ

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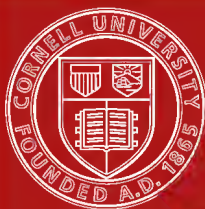
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# ANTI-PRAGMATISM



# ANTI-PRAGMATISM

AN EXAMINATION INTO THE RESPECTIVE  
RIGHTS OF INTELLECTUAL ARIS-  
TOCRACY AND SOCIAL  
DEMOCRACY

BY

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*Sapere aude.* — HORACE.



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TO  
M. THEODORE RIBOT  
OF THE INSTITUTE OF FRANCE



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
WARNING TO THE READERS OF THIS EDITION . . . .	ix
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	xv

## PART I

### PRAGMATISM AND INTELLECTUALISM

CHAP.

I THE PRINCIPLES OF PRAGMATISM . . . . .	21
II THE DEWEY CASE . . . . .	88

## PART II

### PRAGMATISM AND MODERNISM

I SOCIAL PHENOMENA EXPLAINING THE APPEARANCE OF A PRAGMATIC PHILOSOPHY . . . . .	110
II PRAGMATISM OF THE MIDDLE AGES AND MODERN SCHOLASTICISM . . . . .	165

## PART III

### PRAGMATISM AND TRUTH

I THE TRIUMPH OF PRAGMATISM . . . . .	207
II SALVATION FROM PRAGMATIC PHILOSOPHY POSSIBLE BUT NOT PROBABLE . . . . .	223
III IS WILLIAM JAMES A PRAGMATIST? . . . . .	238
CONCLUSION . . . . .	252

APPENDICES	
	PAGE
APPENDIX A    ANSWERS TO SOME CRITICISMS . . . .	253
APPENDIX B    LITERATURE AND THE MORAL CODE . . .	269
APPENDIX C    COMMON SENSE AND PHILOSOPHY . . .	280
INDEX . . . . .	315

## WARNING TO THE READERS OF THIS EDITION

THE author of this book never feared that any serious-minded reader would fail to appreciate the sincerity and earnestness of his efforts. And indeed he has not been deceived. He has rather occasion to be grateful for the courteous tone of the criticisms directed against some of his ideas which are, he is well aware of it, opposed to those of most people in our generation. To speak only of this country, reviewers, in such papers and journals as *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, and *Evening Post*, the *Boston Transcript*, *The Bookman*, and *Current Literature*, have made it a point to give a very fair account of what he said regarding America, and of his views regarding democracy and aristocracy of the intellect; they did so without suggesting interpretations which would favor prejudiced appreciations.

As a matter of fact only two exceptions could be quoted, and they were articles emanating from the pen of two American pragmatists. Still it was enough to show that there were some statements which *might* be misinterpreted if the book was translated and got a wider circulation in this country;

therefore it will not be superfluous to take precaution and warn once more—I say “once more” for warning is found even in the original French edition—against the inclination, which some may feel, to ascribe to the author ideas for which he is not responsible.

With regard to statements concerning America, it will be enough to recommend careful reading of the whole *Introduction* and to underline especially the following passage:

*Note that I have no reproach to urge against society for being pragmatic, that is to say, for watching over its own interests. On the contrary, I think it is perfectly legitimate that it should do so. And, besides, the word “interests” may be taken in the widest, or, if you please, most elevated sense. But I do reproach a school of modern philosophers for wishing to force impersonal philosophy, a moral science, indifferent nature, to speak the same language as our aspirations and our passions and even, I grant, our generous aspirations, our noble passions. Our innate and psychic tendencies (in the moral, social, and religious realms) are phenomena for science to record and authenticate, not to justify or legitimize.*

Thus let it be clearly understood: against a pragmatic conception of life I do not protest, but only against pragmatic philosophers.

With regard to my opinions concerning democracy, I only wish — until the time comes when I can explain my ideas more fully than was possible within the limits of this volume — to benefit by those words of the sage Renan: *One can love the people in holding an aristocratic philosophy, and not love it in loudly advertising democratic principles.* (*Dialogues philosophiques*, p. 16.)

The remark has been made by several reviewers that almost no technical terms were used in this book and thus that it could be understood also by those who are no specialists in philosophy. Mr. Schiller (*Mind*, July, 1909) has probably voiced the opinion of several critics in calling this way of proceeding "a curious theoretical inconsistency." His idea was evidently that, with my opinion that scientific truth ought to be kept out of reach of the general public, I violated my own principles in writing in non-technical style. I am not altogether surprised that the objection should be made, but I answer as follows:

In the first place the book is still philosophical enough so as not to become popular with the masses.

Besides, in using abstract and technical terms the way pragmatists do (and they do more than their opponents rather than less, in spite of the fact that they never tire of accusing others of doing it;<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> As a good example of philosophical obscurity brought about by technical terms, see the first pages of Mr. Schiller's essay on "Faith, Reason, and Religion" in *Studies on Humanism*.

## xii WARNING TO READERS OF THIS EDITION

I do not except Professor James himself from this statement), one leads astray not only the masses, but a good many readers who, although not university people, belong decidedly to the intellectual aristocracy. I will say more; several university scholars who were not especially philosophers, but mathematicians, scientists, linguists, even psychologists, were deceived by the obscurity, or, rather, confusion of pragmatist writings; and this confusion which did not a little contribute to the success of which pragmatism can boast, was achieved by using always at the critical places some technical terms covering risky theories. In my criticism I had in mind just those people; it was enough to tell in plain language what pragmatism was, to expose it. Indeed, as I have pointed out often, both in the text and in notes, many, and of course the most important objections to pragmatism have been made by others, — I refer especially to such excellent criticisms as those of Professor Creighton, *Philosophical Review*, XIII, p. 3; XV, p. 5; XVII, p. 6; Professor Hibben, *Philosophical Review*, XVII, p. 4; Dr. Carus, *Monist*, XVIII, p. 3; XIX, p. 1; Professor Bakewell, *Philosophical Review*, XVII, p. 6, to speak only of American critics,<sup>1</sup> — and if I had wanted to write only for a strictly philosophical public, my book would have been in many places a mere repetition of criticisms which had been made already.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Pratt's book *What is Pragmatism?* came out after *Anti-Pragmatism*,



## WARNING TO READERS OF THIS EDITION xiii

I have not any desire to ignore various criticisms directed against *Anti-Pragmatism* up to the present time. If I have not thought it advisable to make considerable alterations or add many notes in the text itself of this edition, answers to several objections will be found in Appendix A.

A. S.

October, 1909.



## INTRODUCTION

“PRAGMATISM” is only a new term to designate “Opportunism” in philosophy. As a doctrine it does not make good. But pragmatism as revealing a certain state of mind in our present generation has a profound significance.

We declare pragmatism to be bad, not indeed in its moral consequences (which, as a matter of fact, ought not to count in philosophy), but because it introduces into our fashion of thinking a degrading sophistry. Pragmatism, in its modern systematized form, would scarcely have been possible in earlier times. It has, however, become so since erudite scholars and original thinkers have deemed it fit to cater to a public incapable of taking a genuine interest in their researches and their speculations, a public which in the last resort wishes simply to amuse itself with these as it amuses itself with everything else, — the public of our modern democracies. We feel flattered by the plaudits of the crowd, and to procure these we are satisfied to get down to the level of those whom as *thinkers* we should disdain. Popular science, popular art, popular theology — only one thing was lacking — popular philosophy.

realms) are phenomena for science to record and authenticate, not to justify or legitimize. The epoch of scholasticism ought to be left behind for good and all.

And this leads me to add a few words more to this Introduction. If any one should be inclined to see in these pages attacks on America, the country of pragmatism; and if, especially, certain journalists should, in accordance with their custom, make it their pleasure to seek out in my book subjects for sensational and malignant articles, they are hereby informed in advance that they have not understood the book. To be sure, since the pragmatist philosophy is rooted in the pragmatic tendencies of man, it was difficult for me not to occupy myself with the last mentioned, and it is almost inevitable that the superficial reader should imagine that I would extend my criticism of a philosophic theory to a pragmatic conception of life itself. But I affirm nothing of the kind. I do not blame America in the least for its pragmatic ideas, any more than I do any other country. I have insisted repeatedly on the distinction to be drawn (between criticism of a philosophy and criticism of life) in such a way that *those who know how to read* will certainly not be deceived.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore let no one gratuitously ascribe to me opinions about America. I have not expressed any;

<sup>1</sup> I have even approved of these pragmatic traits, both in this volume and elsewhere. See, for example, my article *Mercantilisme et esthétique en Amérique* in *La Revue (ancienne Revue des Revues)* June, 1906.

and any one who should attempt to divine such would almost surely be deceived. The following pages contain merely opinions on pragmatism as a philosophic doctrine. Moreover, the problem that I am discussing — namely, the respective rights of intellectual aristocracy and of modern democracy — is infinitely too large to be reduced to the proportion of an estimate of the intrinsic worth of American civilization. All that it behooves me to say at present is this: If I have spoken more of American than of other countries when the subject under discussion was the relation of pragmatism to life, it was because I was not entirely free in my choice. In the first place it is in America that pragmatism, as a philosophy, has been formulated in its boldest and most logical form. This alone would justify my action. But there was at the same time another more decisive reason: Although, of course, the pragmatic habit of thought is found in every country, I yet felt impelled to borrow my illustrations from America, very much as a geologist who wishes to study certain minerals scattered over the entire surface of the earth would not necessarily go where he would find the largest number of specimens, but where he could obtain the most varied and the most characteristic. America, less trammelled than other countries by social traditions of all kinds, exhibits more distinctly — that is, with less alloy of heterogeneous elements — the pragmatic spirit, which is the modern spirit.

The central theme, or ground idea, of this volume — namely, that there exists a conflict between intellectual truth and moral truth, a conflict that all the ratiocinations of the world will not suppress (for reconciliation is impossible), a conflict that it would be better to accept once for all, without subterfuge, as a fact for which moreover no one is responsible, this idea, I say, has been more than once discussed by me, especially in the form of articles in European and American periodicals. For some of these articles I have deemed the present volume to be the proper place, and, in closing, I wish to thank Messrs. Ribot, of the *Revue philosophique*, Woodbridge, of the *Journal of Philosophy*, and Burns Weston, of the *International Journal of Ethics*, for permission to reproduce them here.

A. S.

# PART I

## PRAGMATISM AND INTELLECTUALISM

*Une science ne peut être normative en tant  
que théorique (LEVY-BRÜHL).*

### CHAPTER I

#### THE PRINCIPLES OF PRAGMATISM

- I. **The end and aim of pragmatism**: to reverse the traditional conception of the relations of life and philosophy; the purpose of the latter should not be to ascertain and verify the truth but to decree it. — II. **The three fundamental arguments of pragmatism**: *a.* The intellectual, rationalistic philosophies have not been able to satisfy us; this creates a presumption in favor of pragmatism. *b.* As a matter of fact man is always pragmatic in his thought; hence pragmatism is the most natural philosophy and the only one of which we are capable. *c.* Pragmatism claims to possess in its criterion of "the expedient" a basis of agreement for all the philosophies, "the expedient" being a principle which is common to all of them. — III. **Refutation of these three arguments**: *a.* All the intellectualist philosophies may be false, but that forms no presumption in favor of the pragmatic method. *b.* From the fact that all the philosophers think, by nature, subjectively like the pragmatists, there would not result any superiority of pragmatism in principle, but there would result this, — either that the other philosophies are worth as much as pragmatism, considered as a philosophy, or that pragmatism is not worth more than they. *c.* To decide whether pragmatism offers a scientific principle of unity we must distinguish at the outset the principle of the pragmatic "expedient" from that of the scientific "expedient" of thinkers like Poincaré, whom the

pragmatists attempt in vain to claim as one of themselves; one of these principles, the latter, is an intellectual "expedient"; the other is really (although it is not so called) a "moral or social" expedient. E. g., the geocentric system, which, according to scientific pragmatism always has been and always will be false; whereas, according to moral (Anglo-Saxon) pragmatism, it would have been correct in the middle ages, but would be false to-day. The gist of the question is the principle of contradiction to be accepted or not? If it is, then pragmatism is no longer to be distinguished from intellectualism and the pragmatic movement is naught. If it is not, then we deny the possibility of any philosophy at all, pragmatism of course included. — Attempts of the pragmatists to escape from this *impasse*: Suicidal arguments of Schiller; James's theory of "Truth," which, when you consider the spirit of it and not the letter, ends by handing over pragmatism, bound hand and foot, to the mercies of intellectualism.

**The real basis of pragmatism**, and what explains the possibility of a theory with so slight a chance of life *per se*: Our science is limited by the laws of knowledge and even in the domains accessible to our faculties it is incomplete. Pragmatism profits by these lacunae. Everywhere, that intellectualism does not bar the way, pragmatism is allowed to propose its theories of social or moral expediences (or opportunism).

**Conclusion**: pragmatism begins where philosophy ends.

**Significant variations** in the expression of the pragmatistic thought of William James from 1897 to 1907. — IV. **Examination of certain applications of the pragmatic method**: Theories of a punitive God and a God of love equally legitimate from a pragmatic point of view; speaking precisely, alone this very intellectualism so scorned by pragmatists can offer a criterion to determine the superiority of one over the other. — V. **The pragmatic method is by its nature incapable of being applied systematically**. Examples of three different and incompatible applications of the so-called "philosophical method" by William James: *a*. In discussing the problem of substance and that of moral consciousness, he condemns the employment of metaphysics and of



anthropomorphism; *b.* In discussing the respective claims of idealism (or theism) and materialism, he himself has recourse to metaphysics; *c.* Finally, when he comes to examine the question of evil, he neither rejects nor admits it, but adopts a third application of the method; that is to say, he calmly mixes the metaphysical potion in the most convenient way for solving the problem according to "expediency."

**Refutation of the objection that pragmatism has no desire to become a system:** Pragmatism having philosophic pretensions *must* be systematic; a philosophy (or a method) is either systematic or it is not.

## I

PRAGMATISM<sup>1</sup> would invert the traditional relations established between philosophy and life. In place of regulating our practical conceptions of the world by our theoretical conceptions, it would have us regulate our theoretical conceptions by our practical conceptions. That is to say, in place of approaching the study of phenomena from a point of view purely objective, it proposes to make teleology, or the doctrine of final causes, the corner-stone of our philosophical edifices. "Pragmatism," says Schiller, consists in "the thorough recognition that

<sup>1</sup> It is my purpose to give an account of the doctrines of pragmatism in the following pages, but only for the purpose of refuting them. For the shades of difference between the various chiefs of the school — from Peirce, who is regarded as the father of modern pragmatism, down to certain recent thinkers in Europe — the reader is referred to the little monograph of Marcel Hébert (*Le Pragmatisme. Étude de ses diverses Formes*, etc. Paris, 1908. 105 pages. See also certain interpretations in Boutroux, *Science et Religion*. Paris, 1908. Part II), and two articles of Lalande in the *Revue philosophique* (February, 1906 and January, 1908).

the purposive character of mental life generally must influence and pervade also our most remotely cognitive activities." (*Humanism*, p. 8.) "One of the maxims dearest to the pragmatists is this: that the meaning of theories consists entirely in the consequences which their followers may expect from them." (Papini, *Popular Science Monthly*, October, 1907, p. 352.<sup>1</sup>) "Truth, for the pragmatist, becomes a class-name for all sorts of definite working values in experience." (James, *Pragmatism*, p. 68; cf. p. 102.) And in place of adopting as a criterion of truth an intellectual or rational principle, wholly impersonal, the pragmatist frankly adopts the principle of a philosophy that agrees with our needs and aspirations. Pragmatism "is, in reality, only the application of Humanism to the theory of knowledge." (Schiller, *Humanism*, p. xxi.) Our endeavor to learn the truth "is necessarily inspired by the conception of some good at which it aims." (*Ibid.* p. 10.) "On pragmatic principles we cannot reject any hypothesis if consequences useful to life flow from it." (James, *Pragmatism*, p. 273.) "'The true,' to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in the way of our behaving." (*Ibid.* p. 222.)

In other words, an idea is not true or false in itself: it becomes so if it is "expedient." "The

<sup>1</sup> Originally written in Italian. I have seen only the English translation.

truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. (Truth *happens* to an idea.) It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process, namely, of its verifying itself, its *verification*. Its validity is the process of its *validation*." (James, *Pragmatism*, p. 201, who here gives a gloss on Schiller, *Humanism*, p. xv.) That is to say, in place of ascertaining and verifying the truth, philosophy decrees it. "We receive, in short, the block of marble, but we carve the statue ourselves." (*Pragmatism*, p. 247.)

## II

Upon what do they ground their reasoning that they thus propose to revolutionize our ideas on the nature of the true?

The arguments of the pragmatists may be reduced to three, as follows:

1. All philosophical systems that are based on a principle purely intellectual have failed to give satisfaction. Should not that create a presumption in favor of a philosophy that does not select an intellectual principle as the fundamental characteristic of truth? William James recognizes that all philosophical theories have their value, of one sort or another, were it only that of making straight the way for a better ("any one of them may from some point of view be useful," he says), and in this practical and relative application it is worthy of esteem. But

(and this is more and more recognized by all) "no theory is absolutely a transcript of reality." (*Pragmatism*, p. 57.) And he concludes as follows:

"Ought not the existence of the various types of thinking which we have reviewed, each so splendid for certain purposes, yet all conflicting still, and neither one of them able to support a claim of absolute veracity, to awaken a presumption favorable to the pragmatic view that all our theories are *instrumental*, are mental modes of *adaption* to reality, rather than revelations or gnostic answers to some divinely instituted world-enigma?" (*Ibid.* pp. 193-194.)

2. The second argument may be summed up thus: All of our philosophical theories, whether we suspect it or not, are inspired by practical reasons that look toward pragmatic ends. Pragmatism is really the only philosophy of which man is capable; so he should resign himself to the fate of either not being a philosopher or else being a pragmatist. "In reality our knowing is driven and guided at every step by our subjective interests and preferences, our desires, our needs, and our ends." (Schiller, *Humanism*, p. 10.) "Whenever we observe a struggle between two rival theories of events we find that it is ultimately the greater conduciveness of the victor to our use and convenience that determines our preference and its consequent acceptance as true." (*Ibid.* p. 59.) "Human motives sharpen all our questions, human satisfactions lurk in all our an-

swers, all our formulas have a human twist." (*Pragmatism*, p. 242.) "In every genuine metaphysical debate some practical issue, however conjectural and remote, is involved." (*Ibid.* p. 100.) For example (says Mr. Schiller, *Humanism*, pp. xi-xii), let us consider two opposite theories or modes of reasoning:

The world is so bad that there must be a better.

The world is so bad that there cannot be a better.

The second argument alone is strictly logical, not allowing any non-rational or non-intellectual element of desire or volition to intervene. Indeed if we conceive of a creator who has the power of making a better world it is (intellectually) unthinkable that he should not have taken advantage of his power to do so at once; and after such a world we admit that there would be no necessity of trying another. But it is precisely because this reasoning is simply intellectual that men have not adopted it, and have preferred the first theory, in which there is that idea of desire and that element of volition which convince humanity of the truth of a theory. It is a *fact* that we reason and decide thus, a fact that nobody can oppose. Mr. Schiller adds that he who declares he prefers the second theory probably deceives himself, believing that disinterested and intellectual considerations have guided him in his choice. But "it may have been a pessimist's despair that clothed itself in the habiliments of logic or it may have been merely stupidity and apathy, a want of imagination and

enterprise in questioning nature." On close examination we should probably find that reasonings of the second type (purely intellectual) "*never* really occur."

Professor James carries even farther than Mr. Schiller this argument that temperament decides opinion. He likes constantly to oppose monistic rationalism to empiricism: "And let me say that it is impossible not to see a temperamental difference at work in the choice between the two philosophies." (*Pragmatism*, p. 259.) Again, elsewhere: "To interpret absolute monism worthily, be a mystic." And he adds instances from Hindoo Vedantists: "You do not reason, but after going through a certain discipline, *you see*, and having *seen*, you can report the truth." (*Ibid.* p. 151.) In a more generalizing way: "The history of philosophy is to a great extent that of a certain clash of human temperaments. . . . Temperament is no conventionally recognized reason; so a philosopher urges impersonal reasons only for his conclusions. Yet his temperament really gives him a stronger bias than any of his more strictly objective premises." (*Ibid.* pp. 6, 7.) He cites, as examples of great thinkers by temperament, Plato, Hegel, Spencer.

Now starting from the fact that it is not possible for the thing to be otherwise than just stated, William James passes to the second affirmation, — that there is reason to believe that the truth must substantially correspond to our aspirations:

"Surely you must admit this, that if there were *no* good for life in true ideas, or if the knowledge of them were positively disadvantageous, and false ideas the only useful ones, then the current notion that truth is divine and precious, and its pursuit a duty, could never have grown up or become a dogma. . . . What would be better for us to believe! This sounds very like a definition of truth. It comes very near to saying 'what we *ought* to believe'; and in that definition none of you would find any oddity. Ought we never not to believe what it is *better for us* to believe? And can we then keep the notion of what is better for us, and what is true for us, permanently apart?" (*Pragmatism*, pp. 76-77.)

And here is the way Mr. Schiller for his part (*Humanism*, p. xiii) passes from the just-mentioned opinion — that our theories are always inspired by pragmatic considerations — to the other, that it is philosophically legitimate that it should be so; "that the canons of right Thought must, even from the most narrowly logical of standpoints, be brought into some relation to the procedures of actual thinking; that in point of fact the former are derived from the latter; that if so, our first mode of reasoning must receive logical recognition because it is not only usual, but useful in the discovery of truth, that a process which yields valuable results must in some sense be valid. . . ." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps I ought to cite here Prof. Dewey, who devotes the first part of his essay, *Logical Conditions of a Scientific Treatment of Morality* (University of Chicago Press, 1903), to the task of assimilating

3. Pragmatism, while in agreement with the facts — and in this they tell us it differs from intellectualist systems — furnishes us a unifying principle for the co-ordination of our philosophical speculations. It did this in the past, unknown to us. “There is absolutely nothing new in the pragmatic method. Socrates was an adept at it. Aristotle used it methodically. Locke, Berkeley, and Hume made momentous contributions to the truth by its means. Shadworth Hodgson keeps insisting that realities are only what they are ‘known as.’” (*Pragmatism*, p. 50.) But it was only employed sporadically by certain philosophers, within certain limits and upon certain subjects. If it is now applied consciously, methodically, and constantly, the philosophical value of the principle will be revealed; it will be found to contain the element common to all the doctrines of the past, the present, and the future, that which may serve as a common bond between them all.

As a matter of fact, this rather negative argument amounts to this: The pragmatic idea, being the spontaneous, human conception — a conception even necessary since it is inevitable — is to be looked for

(on logical ground) scientific judgments to moral judgments, both one and the other (a) being inspired by the desire to solve some special problem, “individual case”; and (b) being acts by which the scientist or the philosopher focusses his judgment (upon those “individual cases”). Although expressed in very technical scholastic terminology this is at bottom the same doctrine as that above indicated in the text. In its ulterior developments the doctrine of Prof. Dewey is distinct from that of Messrs. James and Schiller. The two last named seem to me to be the only pragmatists who are dyed in the grain. We shall encounter Dewey elsewhere in this volume.



everywhere, and a philosophy which should make it its starting point would never be in conflict with any truth. The pragmatists themselves usually formulate this argument negatively: "Pragmatism does not stand for any special results" (*Pragmatism*, p. 51); but neither does it by any means reject any of them *a priori*: "It agrees with nominalism for instance, in always appealing to particulars; with utilitarianism in emphasizing practical aspects; with positivism in its disdain for verbal solutions, useless questions, and metaphysical abstractions." (*Ibid.* pp. 53, 54.) "On pragmatic principles we cannot reject any hypothesis if consequences useful to life flow from it. . . . But if they have any use they have that amount of meaning. And the meaning will be true if the use squares well with life's other uses." (*Ibid.* p. 273.) The pragmatists further recognize that a philosophic unity such as that so long dreamed of by thinkers is not peradventure within the scope, or range, of their method. Yet without claiming to furnish a principle of absolute cohesion, they boast of having adroitly avoided the usual clashings between different doctrines.

### III

Let us now take up again the three foregoing arguments.

1. Why should the fact that the intellectualist applications of rationalism and of empiricism are

unsatisfactory create a presumption in favor of pragmatism? If we are unable to put our trust in Peter or John, does that create a presumption in favor of James? In order to give the argument weight and pith, pragmatists ought to have proved to us, *first*, that these three are the only possible philosophies, and, *secondly*, that one of the three must be true. Now there is absolutely nothing in the world that justifies this restriction to rationalism, empiricism, or pragmatism. And even supposing it were justified, ought we to believe that the failure of the first two is an established thing? To set about doing that, our opponents might base their arguments on two kinds of proof: (a) *A posteriori*, by demonstrating the insufficiency of the doctrines, so far presented under the names "rationalism" and "empiricism." But that is a different thing from proving that all the possibilities of these two methods have been exhausted; that could never be proved *a posteriori*. (b) If the method of attack were *a priori* they would, it is true, have in that a substantial argument against intellectualism in all its forms. For, the laws of thought — of pure reason, as Kant says — lead us into contradictions. Suppose we take, for instance, the idea of space: to the intellect it contains contradictions. The intellect is always obliged to think of space in general as a juxtaposition of finite spaces. Now the addition of as many finite spaces as you please will never give you anything but finite space. On the other hand,

since we cannot conceive of the possibility of a limit to these finite spaces, space must be infinite; the two ideas impose themselves on the mind with equal force, and they are irreconcilable. Three at least of the antimonies of Kant are irreducible (time, space, and first cause); they never have been and never will be refuted; at the very utmost they can only be explained; but to explain is not to suppress. The result of all this is that a philosophy based on pure reason can never *a priori* claim to be true, since we cannot conceive of the true as contradictory. Mr. Schiller somewhere alludes to this fact. He is right, however, in not insisting upon it, because the pragmatists would gain nothing by it. Like all other philosophers they are in search of a truth, and it is very evident that, to get it, "the liberty of their spirits" is subjected to the same yoke that we wear, the same laws of thought. In fact they subject themselves to these laws in so far as they compare and contrast pragmatism with empiricism and rationalism. Things are only compared and contrasted when they have some point of contact. The basis of comparison of the three philosophies of which we are speaking is their respective ability to gratify the demands of the intellect. What the pragmatists can do, and what we all do, is to seek out hypotheses and explanatory principles that satisfy our reason (within the limits of the laws of knowledge) better and more completely than present systems and hypotheses.

Some one may say: But suppose you have elaborated a system intellectually perfect, one that includes all the phenomena, still can we always conceive that there may chance to be another explanation which would, intellectually, account for everything; now, when you have these two explications you could never be absolutely sure which is the truth. I reply: Pragmatism is in the same predicament. It is useless to tell us that, besides the intellectual criterion, pragmatism possesses a practical criterion; for this satisfaction of our practical aspirations by a philosophy may itself be only the result of chance.

Thus compared with former philosophical conceptions, pragmatism has in itself nothing that *a priori* can more commend it to the favor of the devotee of pure thought.

2. The thing upon which the pragmatists rely — that there is always underneath our reasonings some practical consideration, and that even the systems of the great philosophers are only the result of the temperament of their authors — may be true. Yet the conclusion, that *therefore* philosophic truth is to be found in reasonings modified and colored by the practical and the temperamental, that the criterion of truth is “that which we ought to believe” for pragmatic reasons — this conclusion is notoriously illegitimate.

In order to get it accepted they are obliged to have recourse to a confusion of ideas which itself rests

upon the double meaning of the verb *must*: (a) we "must" think pragmatically in this sense, that we are so made by nature that practical considerations direct our thoughts; (b) we "must" think pragmatically in the sense that, philosophically speaking (logically or even morally), it is well for us so to think. The first meaning is readily proved, and then, for further deductions, the second is quietly substituted for it. The sleight-of-hand trick is not our invention. Let us recall the words of Mr. Schiller:

"The canons of right thought *must* . . . be brought into some relation to the procedures of actual thinking; in point of fact the former are derived from the latter [first meaning]; if so, our first mode of reasoning *must* receive logical recognition [substitution of logic for psychology: second meaning]; . . . a process which yields valuable results *must* in some sense be valid [second meaning]." (*Humanism*, p. xiii.)

Elsewhere it is the word *can* that is juggled with:

"Our interests impose the conditions under which alone Reality *can* be revealed. . . . Neither the question of fact, therefore, nor the question of knowledge *can* be raised without raising also the question of value." (*Humanism*, p. 10.)

First meaning: It is impossible, because of our nature, to conceive of reality independently of our interests; hence (second meaning) it is impossible

This is a very remarkable thing! So it is out of this very subjectivity of which I was just speaking that the fundamental principle can be formed. It is easy to understand now why the pragmatists persisted in finding it everywhere. If they gave themselves so much trouble to point it out constantly, it was surely not because they wanted to make no use of it whatever. Only, while heretofore they had excused themselves, so to speak, for admitting it into philosophy (laying stress upon our dependence on it as regards the laws of thought, or, again referring to the logical value of the subjective even in the scientific hypothesis, and limiting themselves to saying that therefore we should not reject pragmatism on the pretext that it presupposes subjectivity), they now suddenly change their tactics, and pass from the defensive to the offensive. This subjective element in philosophy not only is not illegitimate, or an obstruction or a nuisance; and not only should we refrain from asking pardon for giving it recognition in science, but it is affirmed that really it alone gives value to our theories; that where it is not there is death; and that the fact that pragmatism makes it the corner-stone of its philosophical edifice is just that which gives it superiority over intellectualism. From the condition of a poor pariah, in which it existed but yesterday, this subjectivity is suddenly raised to royal rank.

It will readily be perceived that we have reached the critical point of the pragmatic doctrine. How

can this "expediency" or this "subjectivity" so suddenly change rôles? Is it really the same subjectivity as that of yesterday, or, indeed, has the value of the term changed in passing from intellectualism to pragmatism? It is to be observed that it is precisely at this point of the demonstration of their doctrine that the defenders of pragmatism grow less clear and less precise, that they no longer operate on the fighting-line of their proper speculations but are fain to fall back on a line of thought in the philosophy of science recently created by Poincaré and certain other French scientists (cf. *Pragmatism*, pp. 55-57).<sup>1</sup> These savants seem to have come just in the nick of time. Among other things they insist on the relative and subjective character of science. They affirm that a scientific theory is nothing in itself, and takes its value solely from the results that we derive from it in our verification of phenomena; that the ultimate aim of the scientist is not at all the discovery of laws as the world has been so long affirming, but the explanation of the fact; we call a law "true" when, and because, it

<sup>1</sup> For an enumeration of scholars and thinkers who are, with or without consent, pointed out to the world as pragmatists, see Mr. Schiller's Preface to *Studies in Humanism*. In this volume I never speak of Bergson, an authority constantly referred to by pragmatists. After all the merit of Bergson consists chiefly in having battered down modern dogmatism in philosophy. What will come out of it all is not very clear as yet, but so far his work seems rather negative. In a recently published volume, one reads the following interesting statement by Wm. James: "I have to confess that Bergson's originality is so profuse that many of his ideas baffle me entirely" (*A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 226).

gives practical results in its application, but not at all because it may be true or not *per se*; for, of that we can know nothing; and, in fact, when we find a law and a phenomenon that absolutely contradict each other, it is not the phenomenon that we are in a position to modify but the law.

It is easy to see what fascination lay for the pragmatists in these ideas, and they were not long in seeking an alliance with the French thinkers. This is exactly what we wish, they say: to judge a theory by results; the true is that which yields results, and we do not adopt any other criterion than that; if certain philosophical doctrines enter into conflict with life, it is the philosophical theory we ought to reject and not the claims of life.

This is very clever, and at first glance seems plausible. But appearances are deceiving. As a matter of fact there is nothing more different, more fundamentally irreconcilable, than the ideas of the French school of Poincaré and those of pragmatism. The possibility of the deceptive association and fraternization of the two comes simply from the indefinite meaning of certain terms, such as "expedient," "useful," "result." To be convinced of this we need only extend the definitions a little, to express the sub-meanings, the thought underneath the written words. We will then see that by the French school, Poincaré for example, a law is declared to be true when it gives *scientific* results; that is to say (speaking briefly), when it serves to explain natural



phenomena. By the Anglo-Saxon pragmatists a theory or a law is declared to be true when it gives *results that are desirable from a moral point of view*, when it is *socially* useful or expedient. The difference between the two theories is now at once evident — and at the same time one sees the subtlety of the representatives of moral pragmatism who suggest this astonishing identification of utility in the sense of scientific expediency and utility in the sense of moral expediency. The formulating of theories serviceable in *explaining facts* — such is scientific pragmatism (if you will call it so); the formulating of theories to *justify a moral ideal* — such is the pragmatism of the philosophers who cultivate what we may call moral pragmatism. In other words, the latter will not simply accept or reject scientific laws or theories because they give account of reality (which would be a very legitimate thing), but because they do or do not render an account of reality *as we wish it to be*. The subjectivism of modern thinkers amounts simply to this, that it reaffirms what Hume and Kant had firmly established, but which had of late dropped out of sight for a little, owing to the too broad interpretations of modern positivism; — namely, that the laws are within us and not outside of us, and that, so far from these laws inhering in phenomena, we make them ourselves, after a fashion, since in order to comprehend them we have to adapt them to our knowing faculties. There is no discussion by scholars of the Poin-

caré type of subjectivity in the sense that the thinker may, as seems "expedient," adopt this or that doctrine or law; the subjectivity of the savant is as predetermined in its elements, and as predetermined by phenomena in its judgments, as of yore; and it is a mere piece of pleasantry to wish to make use of this epistemological subjectivism to form the basis of a philosophy which claims that with it "human arbitrariness has driven divine necessity from scientific logic." (*Pragmatism*, p. 57.) So far from corroborating each other, the two subjectivisms exclude each other. For instance, William James observes (*Pragmatism*, p. 115 ff.) that, in order to admit the sense of responsibility, if we stand by the rationalistic or intellectualistic point of view, we have need at once of determinism and freedom of the will; pragmatic subjectivism *allows then* to intervene and impose on us the belief in the freedom of the will. A scientific pragmatist will never admit that, and precisely because of his personal subjectivism, he submits to laws of thought which *forbid* him to conceive of the coexistence of moral responsibility (which presupposes determinism) and the freedom of the will. If you should tell him there are facts which compel us to admit this coexistence he will deny the facts, — in this sense, that the facts in themselves do not exist for us; what we call facts are just interpretations of facts, and the intellectualist would declare that the facts are not acceptable to him unless interpreted in such a way

as to satisfy subjectivism, or, let us say, scientific pragmatism; that is to say, the laws of thought and of logic. "Everything that is not thought," says Poincaré (*Valeur de la science*, p. 276), is pure nothingness. Inasmuch as we can only think thought, and all the words we employ in speaking of things can only express thought [this is what I have called "interpretations of facts"], to say that there is anything else than thought is therefore an affirmation devoid of sense."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It must be admitted, however, that certain French philosophers have sometimes encouraged the confusion between moral pragmatism and scientific pragmatism. Le Roy, for example, and with an aim which implies the same prepossessions as those of James. But (need it be said?) that does not render the confusion more acceptable.

I am not aware that Poincaré has ever explicitly stated his position with regard to his unsolicited pragmatist friends; but here are a few lines from an article "The Choice of Facts" which he published recently in the *Monist* (April, 1909) and which are of interest at this point of our discussion. "The scientist," he says, "does not study nature because it is useful; he studies it because he delights in it. . . ." (pp. 236-237.) Or again: "The people whose ideal most conformed to their highest interest . . . pursued their ideals *without reference to consequences*, but while the quest led some to destruction, to others it gave empire. . . ." (p. 238.) No possible doubt remains here that Poincaré wants to distinguish between pragmatic consequences and scientific consequences; even, to moral consequences he remains quite indifferent.

The confusion I have pointed out in the preceding pages has also been admirably emphasized in the luminous article of Professor J. G. Hibben, "The Test of Pragmatism" (*Philosophical Review*, July, 1908). "The whole modern spirit of research is most emphatically opposed to the pragmatist's suggestion that we should endeavor to make the phenomena of the universe bend to our will. Indeed it insists above all things that the investigator, in whatever field, should seek by patient laborious observation to know the nature of the given phenomena as they actually are in all of their essential and characteristic features. . . ." (p. 380.) "The fact is that whenever there is

The key to the confusion of thought is so plainly right here, that I do not hesitate to give one more concrete illustration in order that the reader may put his finger on the difference between modern scientific subjectivism and pragmatic subjectivism. Poincaré shows that we can very properly maintain, scientifically, the two ideas that the earth revolves about the sun and that the sun revolves about the earth, — the first of the two theories by placing ourselves, so to speak, outside of the solar system and observing what takes place. We then see the tiny earth circling about the vast sun; it is the simplest and most normal way of regarding the matter. But the inhabitant of the earth rightly maintains that from his point of view, the sun revolves about the earth, and he proceeds to demonstrate it. He is obliged to have recourse to calculations and demonstrations much more complex; that is the only difference. In truth, he proves the same thing as the first. Here we have scientific subjectivism. Both

a demand for cash value, then the real [logical] value is always subjected to some discounting process." (p. 369.)

Then again the papers by Professor J. E. Creighton in the *Philosophical Review* ought to be recalled here. As early as 1904 he called the attention of philosophers to the inadmissible confusion, saying: "The appeal is to experience . . . but to experience as systematized by thought" (XIII, No. 3, p. 291); and more precisely still he refers to "the ambiguity that in this use attaches to the word 'practical,' as well as to the terms 'end' and 'purpose.' These words seem to be employed by this theory to cover two modes of consciousness that are usually, at least, regarded as essentially different. . . ." (p. 295.) (Cf. also "Experience and Thought" by the same. *Philosophical Review*, XV, No. 5, pp. 482-483.)

positions or arguments are true. So a child is not (subjectively) wrong in saying, while he is aboard a moving train, that he is standing still and the fields and trees are passing along before him, while for us (objectively) it is rather the child and the train that are passing. You do not choose between one theory or another, you simply choose the method of presenting one and the same idea. Moral pragmatism, on the other hand, is pluralist; it talks about truths in the plural." (*Pragmatism*, p. 67.) Let us in imagination transport ourselves to the sixteenth century and examine the same theme — the movement of the earth and the sun — from the pragmatic point of view. At that epoch any one contesting the orthodox belief in the current geometric or cosmological system would shake the power of the church, and the church of that time was trying very hard to civilize Europe. To unsettle this civilizing force might have terrible consequences, replunge the masses into a barbarism from which they were "still pawing to be free." It was therefore pragmatically expedient that for some time yet the sun should continue to revolve around the earth — absolutely so, of course, and not in the relative sense of Poincaré's second case. Whatever we might think about the matter to-day, in the sixteenth century, *in order to conform to its principles*, pragmatism would have been obliged to sustain a theory in contradiction with science and also in contradic-

tion with the pragmatism of the nineteenth century. There you have pragmatic subjectivism.<sup>1</sup>

I have purposely referred to an instance that Professor James himself had chosen (among others) to prove his conception of pragmatism. Did he choose it in a kind of defiant spirit of knightly challenge to rightly and duly show that he did not fear for his philosophy the most difficult of tests? I know not. But in any case he presents the matter from an entirely wrong angle or point of view. Nothing is better adapted to imparting confusion to the discussion than his amphibological method of expressing himself. Not only does he profit by the fact that an unforewarned person would not suspect this confusion of the intellectualist and pragmatistic subjectivism which I have carefully distinguished: he suggests and provokes the confusion in the reader in whom it did not previously exist. In brief, he obscures (he is obliged to obscure), for the requirements of his argument, what was before clear. Listen to his statement:

"Ptolemaic astronomy, Euclidean space, Aristotelian logic, scholastic metaphysics, were expedient for centuries, but human experience has boiled over those limits and we now call these things only relatively true or true within those borders of experience." (*Pragmatism*, p. 223.)

<sup>1</sup> It is probably superfluous to add that the argument here pursued would not be refuted should some one take it into his head to try to prove that the church was not a civilizing power in the sixteenth century.

This means that, although to-day the Ptolemaic theory is left behind, it might be true for the learned men of the middle ages, who did not possess the great and overwhelming body of facts that we now have. It is clear that the idea of "opportunism" or "expediency" involved here is to be taken in the intellectualist sense. James adds further: "'Absolutely' they (these theories) are false; for we know that those limits (of experience) were casual, and might have been transcended by past theorists just as they are by present thinkers." And all this is perfectly evident. Only now, if James has employed the word "expedient" in the intellectualist or scientific sense, he no longer has the right to use it in the pragmatic or moral sense. But this is just what he does; it is precisely what he is *obliged to do* if he wishes to draw conclusions and make inferences from scientific relativism or opportunism to the pragmatic relativism or opportunism that he introduces into philosophy. Here is a passage that shows the adroit way in which he suggests the substitution: "We say this theory solves a problem on the whole more satisfactorily than that theory; but that means more satisfactorily to ourselves, and individuals will emphasize their points of satisfaction differently." (*Pragmatism*, p. 61.) It is evidently no longer a satisfaction purely intellectual of which he is here speaking.

Of course James was too clever to state the heliocentric theory in terms of moral pragmatism after

he had expressed it in those of the intellectualist pragmatism, for that would have been to let the cat out of the bag. Now, since that is just what I want — to let the cat out of the bag — I will take the liberty once more of speaking for him as follows, in words that moral pragmatism would have to use. In the middle ages the heliocentric theory was not only not true intellectually for the scholastic philosophers, for their scientific experience was limited, but it was not true, morally, — and this is the essential point, — for it was baneful in the special conditions of society existing at that time. To-day the true progress of humanity is not affected one way or the other by the heliocentric theory, so it may be correct. In scientific opportunism it is the intellectual criterion alone that counts and this criterion is *always the same*; in moral opportunism it is the ethical point of view that counts, both to-day and in the middle ages, and this criterion is *different* according to circumstances.

And so true is it that Professor James aims ultimately and exclusively at *meliorism* (which is of moral nature), that he finally, without hesitation, admits metaphysical *pluralism* (which is of intellectual nature), a doctrine he had just denied; “‘absolutely’ they (these theories) are false . . . and might have been transcended by past theorists just as they are by present thinkers.” Only by admitting several different philosophical, or logical, or metaphysical, or intellectual principles, can he main-



tain the rights of the expedient in the "meliorist" sense in a way to give more satisfaction to us, — a satisfaction that individuals will each express in a different way. And that is what he wants.

Thus it is clear that "the expedient," as the criterion of our method of thought either signifies nothing, or else it signifies that the pragmatists declare themselves independent of every intellectual principle, among others of the principle of contradiction. If this is not so, in what would consist the quarrel they pick with intellectualism? Why all this agitation and the creation of a whole philosophical movement which is likely to "equal in importance the Reformation of the sixteenth century" if it is not going to reform anything at all? The pragmatists, besides, are profuse in their assertions that they have come forward for the purpose of protesting against the postulates of intellectualism, against "those cramping rules and regulations by which the Brahmins of the academic cast are tempted to impede the free expansion of human life" (*Humanism*, p. xvi), against that tyranny that has hindered us from taking cognizance of facts and has given the finishing touch in its deplorable "monistic music." To all this the thing to do is to oppose the "expedient" or "opportunism." The pragmatic motives, says Mr. Schiller, that dictate the philosophic question, "What is reality?" being different, their bearing or application is also different,

and different must be the replies." (*Humanism*, p. 11.) Mr. Schiller says "different," not contradictory, but this is implied. He knows it very well, for he has said some lines above: "If one had to choose between Irrationalism and Intellectualism, there would be no doubt that the former would have to be preferred."<sup>1</sup> (*Ibid.* p. 6.) In fact, even supposing there are at the present time no contradictory theories in the affirmations of the pragmatists, how are you going to prove there never will be? and since it is admitted that the replies may be really different according to the way the question is asked, it is quite necessary to admit also that these replies will sometimes not be in accord. If "different" simply signifies, as in scientific subjectivism, that one refers to the same theory presented under a different form, why employ this term "different" in speaking of the theory? Papini is still more explicit: "Prag-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Schiller denies me the right to interpret this passage literally in *Mind*, July, 1909 (p. 426), on the ground that he says a few lines farther on that he can hold all his pragmatic theories "without losing faith in the intellect." Now, if only Mr. Schiller had *proved* that he could do that instead of simply *saying* that he did. Our ears are still ringing with the anathemas of pragmatists against metaphysicians, who, to use the term of Renan, are hopelessly trying to do such an absurd thing as "to define the infinite." But I do not think metaphysicians ever uttered such suicidal statements of their position as Mr. Schiller, who calmly says that Pragmatism "vindicates the rationality of Irrationalism, without becoming irrational"; and how proud he is of this jewel is shown by the fact that he quotes it himself in his criticism in *Mind*, underlining carefully the last part. Not only did he not appreciate my kindness in not making use of the phrase in my book, but he reproaches me for it. Indeed, I am glad to give him satisfaction in this English edition — surprised, however, at such candor.

matism is less a philosophy than a method of doing without a philosophy." (*Popular Science Monthly*, p. 354.)

Undoubtedly it requires courage to speak as Mr. Schiller does, and Mr. Papini leaves us in a meditative mood. For, after all, how shall we represent to ourselves this fashion of putting ourselves above all logic? It is absolutely consistent with pragmatist principles, one cannot too often repeat. But how could it be possible? We know very well that it could n't; but let the pragmatists themselves speak.

If any one could have untied, or even cut, this Gordian knot it would have been William James. He would not have imprudently burned his vessels behind him like Papini. He claims to observe the postulates of a philosophy, and the truths of pragmatism ought not to contradict each other. But listen: "If there be any life that it is really better we should lead, and if there be any idea which, if believed in, would help us to lead that life, then it would be really *better for us* to believe in that idea, *unless indeed belief in it incidentally clashed with other greater vital benefits.*" (*Pragmatism*, p. 76.) The italics are Professor James's.

That is the language of a man who is not anxious to violate the principle of contradiction. It only remains for us to find out whether he *can* reconcile such a sentiment with ideas such as these: "On pragmatic principles we cannot reject any hypothesis if consequences useful to life flow from it"

(*Pragmatism*, p. 273); or, "Human arbitrariness has driven divine necessity from scientific logic." (*Ibid.* p. 57.)

The relations between pragmatism and intellectualism are examined in the sixth lecture on pragmatism "The Conception of Truth." Let us follow the author's argument very closely.

James waives aside the conception of truth that it is a copy of reality, and also the conception that it is what God wants us to believe. These, and all other conceptions of a rationalistic and intellectualistic character, even if they were intellectually maintainable, have the common defect of being "indifferent"; truth so conceived is something "inert," without result or consequence. Pragmatism has other needs or demands which it expresses by asking its usual question: "Grant an idea or belief to be true, what concrete difference will its being true make in any one's actual life?" (*Pragmatism*, p. 200.) In good sooth we might go no farther than this sentence, "grant such or such an idea or belief to be true. . . ." Does n't this mean that before an idea can be true pragmatically it ought to be true rationally? and thus every one be forced to recognize that the traditional relations between practical and theoretical cannot be overturned? that pragmatism ought to follow intellectualism and not the contrary? <sup>1</sup> According to this the relations between

<sup>1</sup> Professor J. G. Hibben, in the article already mentioned, "The Test of Pragmatism" (in *Philosophical Review*, July 15, 1908), com-

the two methods or philosophies might be compared somewhat closely with those existing in a parliament in which the Lower Chamber proposes laws and the Upper Chamber either accepts or refuses to ratify them. But the Upper Chamber could not adopt any law which had not previously been declared practicable by the Lower Chamber. Similarly, if a theory is declared correct by intellectualism, pragmatism reserves the right to sanction it or not, but it might not propose any theories of its own.

Yet as a matter of fact, pragmatism does not rest content with so little; it claims to dictate, on its own responsibility, *that which it is right or expedient that the truth should be*. To the question cited above, "Grant an idea or belief to be true, what concrete difference will its being true make in any one's actual life?" it does not simply reply, "That would be good," or "That would be bad," but answers by a definition of the true which implies *a totally different question*; namely, "A certain idea or a certain belief being given (remark that the premises no longer contain anything about the "true" or the "untrue"), what difference would that make in practice and which could we declare to be true?" Ignoring what looks very much like a new feat of prestidigitation, let us ask if this fashion of rele-

ing to examine the pragmatist claim that truth must fit not only the "concrete situation of facts" but also "do no violence to the fundamental laws of our logical nature," says: "Verification of this kind, however, concedes in its very statement the consideration of a higher standard to which the simple pragmatic test must conform" (p. 371).

gating intellectualism to the second place can be realized. Here is James's reply to the question asked by him and reproduced above, and his definition of the true:

*"True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, and verify. False ideas are those that we cannot,"* etc. (*Pragmatism*, p. 201.)

Let us look again at these terms. *Those that we can assimilate*; that is to say, the truth is measured by our standard, not solely in the sense of Protagoras (cf. James, p. 223) and of Kant (that, being perceived by us intellectually, it must take the forms that our knowing faculties impose upon it), but that it must in addition be reduced to the form which our needs and desires impose upon it, — in a word, our *pragmatic* faculties. (Mr. Schiller develops this thesis by referring it directly to Kant, who has established the first standard and who must be completed by accepting this second standard.) (*Humanism*, pp. 9, 10.)

*Those that we can validate* or turn to account; that is to say: this is true which is useful. "You can say of a truth (which from being indifferent becomes at a given moment useful) either that *it is useful because it is true*, or that *it is true because it is useful*." (*Pragmatism*, p. 204.) "Our account of truth is an account of truths in the plural, of processes of leading, realized *in rebus*, and having only this quality in common, that they *pay*." (*Ibid.* p. 218.)

This apprises us of nothing new; but what is the value of the other terms, *corroborate* and *verify*, coming after the foregoing? Either they are a simple repetition of those first ones under a new form (that is to say, our criterion being our power of thinking and our utility, *verify* would be a repetition of *assimilate* and *corroborate* would repeat *validate*); or else these two terms introduce surreptitiously something new that was not contained in *assimilate* and *validate*. In that case, what can this something new be? It can only be intellectualism, that very intellectual criterion that pragmatism would, if not suppress, at least subordinate to its own authority. But then it is easy to see that, whether you place the intellectual postulates after or before the others, is of very little consequence so long as you agree to satisfy them all the same. And in this simple transposition in the order of mention consists, in the last resort, the attempt of Professor James to give pragmatism the precedence over intellectualism in the question "What is truth?"<sup>1</sup>

And the continuation of Professor James's lecture shows us that the matter in hand is indeed this intellectualist element, and not the mere addition of two synonyms to the preceding verbs. We had well

<sup>1</sup> Not only do you not save anything by this plan of precedence, but you run the risk of complicating things most decidedly. Suppose you have completed your pragmatic argument on some point, and that passing next to verification by intellectualism you should find a contradiction which should force you to abandon your theories, you would then have heavy work on hand which you could have spared if you had proceeded according to the traditional order.

understood that of two philosophical theories the more useful should be preferred. Yet all of a sudden Professor James bethinks himself that there are "realities" where notions of "true and false beliefs obtain" independently of every philosophical theory, even of pragmatism "and here the beliefs are absolute or unconditional." (*Pragmatism*, p. 209.) These are "ideas purely mental," such as  $2 + 4 = 6$ ; and, pragmatically, this gets us into difficulties. Just before, he had assured us that we can say, "It is useful because it is true," or, "It is true because it is useful." Now, then, this criterion of utility is only true within certain limits!

There are cases — the case of a creditor, for example — where it would be useful to have  $2 + 4 = 7$ , or, on the other hand — for the debtor — to have  $2 + 4 = 5$ . So we have to admit that we sometimes come up against "realities" in which the principles of the expedient and the inexpedient cannot be applied. Worse still, "our ideas must agree with realities, be such realities concrete or abstract, be they facts or be they principles, under the penalty of endless inconsistency and frustration." (*Pragmatism*, p. 211.) Pitiably avowed of the impotence of pragmatism! for here "to agree" means to agree intellectually. In other words, when pragmatism is in conflict with intellectualism — and we have just seen that there are such conflicts — far from pragmatism compelling intellectualism to yield, it is the former that lays down its arms.



That Professor James himself recognizes and is the first to point out that there are facts that impose limits in pragmatism does not render the facts less embarrassing. At the confessional a sinner who confesses may be pardoned; in philosophy he cannot be. It is not sufficient for the philosopher to recognize the difficulty; he must remove it. Now it is impossible for James to dream of doing so. While recognizing, then, that pragmatism is obliged to take cognizance of what Kant has well called "synthetic judgments *a priori*" (it matters very little, by the way, whether these judgments are irreducible by analysis or not), James recognizes at least that pragmatism shares with intellectualism the empire of philosophy, — intellectualism not as the representative of some system, if you please, but intellectualism as a method; for we must not allow ourselves to be taken in by this cunning *ruse de guerre* of the pragmatists by which they would fain make us believe that every time people speak of intellectualism they speak of a rigid system.

This is not all. In addition to the sphere of pragmatic "realities" (in which we judge in accordance with the criterion of the expedient), and that of "realities" furnished by the synthetic *a priori* judgments which are independent of pragmatism, Professor James is obliged to add a third sphere of "realities," namely, "the whole body of other truths already in our possession." (*Pragmatism*, p. 212.) And in order that a pragmatic theory be valid, it

must not only be expedient, not only not contradict the synthetic *a priori* judgments, but, further, not be found in contradiction with other theories previously adopted. (This, however, does not hinder our occasionally preserving a new theory and rejecting an old one with which it is not in agreement — only there must be no logical incompatibility in the body of accepted theories.) Here we have it, *ipsissimis verbis*:

“To ‘agree’ in the widest sense with a reality *can only mean to be guided either straight up to it or into its surroundings, or to be put into such working touch with it as to handle either it or something connected with it better than if we disagreed.*” (*Pragmatism*, pp. 212, 213.)

This intricate and subtle definition (purposely made so, in order that, by the terms “working touch” and “handle,” some few fragments of pragmatic elements might be saved) simply means that a theory in order to be pragmatically true must not be in (intellectual) disagreement with any “reality” whatever, or with any truth in the same group or in any other group. And Professor James himself adds, as an after thought to his definition, “better either intellectually or practically” (!) Yet notwithstanding this he had written a few lines before, “Here it is that pragmatism and intellectualism begin to part company.” But it is just the opposite that is true; it is here they show that they can never part company; there is not the shadow of a differ-

ence left between them. A pragmatic theory is only acceptable when it agrees with other pragmatic theories, or with the principles of pure reason, or with every logical theory derived from these. So be it, but this is a conception of the true that any intellectualist philosopher would adopt, for the precise reason that all trace of pragmatism has been removed.

Five lines farther down Professor James again tries to waive aside intellectualism. "To copy a reality is, indeed, one very important way of agreeing with it, but it is far from being essential. The essential thing is the process of being guided." But Professor James's intellectualist honesty is stronger than his pragmatism, and he resumes: "Any idea that helps us to *deal*, whether practically or intellectually (note again that "or *intellectually*") with either the reality or its belongings, that does n't entangle our progress in frustrations, that *fits*, in fact, and adapts our life to the reality's whole setting, will agree sufficiently to meet the requirement."

And again three pages farther on: we must have a theory that "works," with no capricious logic; a theory "must derange common sense and previous belief as little as possible, and it must lead to some sensible terminus or other that can be verified exactly. To 'work' means both these things; and the squeeze is so tight that there is little loose play for any hypothesis. Our theories are wedged and controlled as nothing else is." (*Pragmatism*, pp. 216, 217.)

Behold, then, pragmatism, by James's own avowal, bound hand and foot and delivered over to the mercies of intellectualism!

It is undoubtedly possible for the theories of pragmatism to form a natural and homogeneous abode intellectually, and not come into logical collision with each other at any point. But we should then have to say that one of two things would be true: either (a) we should accept the pragmatist philosophy as true independently of the pragmatic method; that is to say, not because it is pragmatic, but because it satisfies the postulates of intellectualism; the world would be explained (intellectually) from the teleological point of view, and there would be no need of submitting philosophy to the method extolled by James; or (b) the agreement of pragmatism and intellectualism would have to be regarded as the result of chance. But what an unimaginable accumulation of unheard-of fortuities would be necessary in order that a philosophy the field of which is all phenomena, past, present, future, scientific, ethical, social, political, etc., etc., and which is constructed on a certain principle, should coincide down to the minutest details with the postulates of a philosophy conceived on a principle wholly different if not incompatible! And then again this imaginary coincidence would have no more value from a pragmatist point of view than if it did not exist, for, as we have seen, it is precisely what the pragmatists are

trying to claim, that the simple fact of being in agreement with the postulates of intellectualism is not a sufficient sanction for a philosophy. The intellectualists alone could conscientiously adopt the system, for they limit themselves to the endeavor to explain the world theoretically; they believe they would accomplish not a little if they could find a universal principle giving account of all phenomena, even if they could not prove that this principle corresponds accurately to the truth *per se*. Anyway, such a demonstration is beyond the power of human faculties.

Summarizing now the discussion: The position of the pragmatists is this: they would have liked to discard, and ought to have discarded, intellectualism in favor of pragmatism; but that is impossible, for pragmatism would be an unrestricted fancy if not watched over and controlled by intellectualism. No pragmatism without intellectualism! On the other hand, it is easy to see that intellectualism can very well dispense with pragmatism; and, moreover, it deals with reality as much as its opponent;<sup>1</sup> not in the pragmatic sense, it is true, but it can only be reproached for that when it is proved that it is illegitimate to deal with it in any other way than the pragmatic. Professor James says that Spencer would be

<sup>1</sup> "Now, in order to carry on this 'ancient quarrel' on equal terms, it is necessary at the present time to begin with an emphatic protest against the pragmatist's assumption that he, and he alone speaks in the name of experience." (J. E. Creighton, *Experience and Thought*. *Philosophical Review*, XV, No. 5, p. 484.)

an excellent pragmatist if philosophy only had to do with the past; but since it deals also with the future, his system is worthless. It is possible that the system of philosophy thus accused is worthless, but it is absurd to maintain that Spencer does not take into account the future. How could he be said not to take any account of it when he formulates relations of laws between phenomena? He does not take it into account in the spirit of pragmatism; but that is a very different matter.

. . . . .

I beg leave to open here a parenthesis:

It ought in justice to be stated that the confusion between what I have called scientific pragmatism and ethical pragmatism is not a thing of recent date. It has always more or less vaguely existed in the minds of men. It was particularly strong in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and especially in England was the philosophy of this epoch encumbered with errors of this kind. One could, however, make good this difference, that in the eighteenth century the thinking world was *not yet* wholly freed from the theologico-social spirit of scholasticism, whereas to-day in the twentieth century, after we have pretty well rid ourselves of this in the world of thought, pragmatism wants to plunge us into it *anew*.

I shall treat in another chapter of Rousseau as precursor of modern pragmatism. M. Texte, in his book *Rousseau et le cosmopolitisme littéraire* studies

the precursors of Rousseau. I borrow the three following citations from him :

"Those who seriously apply themselves (says Locke, in his *De Arte Medica*) to displaying and arranging abstractions give themselves a good deal of trouble for little result and would be just as well employed although they are grown men, in playing with their childhood's dolls. . . . There are no intellectual requirements worthy of name except those that lead to some new and useful invention, that teach us to do something better, quicker, and more easily than before. Any other kind of speculation, though curious and refined and seemingly profound, is only a vain and idle philosophy, the occupation of idlers."

Elsewhere he says :

"Our business in this world is not to know all things, but those which concern the conduct of life."

Dr. Johnson, in *The Rambler*, No. 24, writes :

"When a man employs himself upon remote and unnecessary subjects, and wastes his life upon questions which cannot be resolved, and of which the solution would conduce very little to the advancement of happiness ; when he lavishes his hours in calculating the weight of the terraqueous globe, or in adjusting successive systems of worlds beyond the reach of the telescope ; he may be very properly recalled from his excursions by this precept (' Know thyself ') and reminded that there is a nearer being with which it is duty to be more acquainted, and from which his attention has hitherto been withheld by studies to which he has no other motive than vanity or curiosity."

Similar passages abound in the writers of this epoch. They are contained in germ, in Bacon's aphorism, "Knowledge is power" (to be contrasted with "Knowledge is foresight" of contemporary science). Like the pragmatists of to-day, these thinkers did not care for science as science, and when we admire them for having attained to the impersonal and disinterested study of nature, we really praise them for something they cultivated *by accident* and not out of deliberate foresight. The ultimate aim of scientific speculations was, as the citations just given show, the well-being of humanity in the broad sense of that word. And from this point of view there is not so very much difference between their spirit and that of the middle ages. It consists above all in taking a different view of the destiny of man; but the end is the same. In the scholastic philosophy, happiness in the religious sense is the aim; that is to say, in the sense of the renunciation of earthly life for the life celestial. After the Renaissance religion took on a utilitarian character in the earthly sense, or at any rate all happiness was not deferred till the future, and suffering was no longer the absolute condition of entering heaven. If there was any need of renunciation it was not at all that enjoyment was bad in itself, but because it was necessary to respect the rights of others in our enjoyment, as they were under obligation to respect ours.

Now it is this new conception (new in Christian civilization) of the right to terrestrial happiness



which has indirectly brought science into favor in place of the scholastic philosophy. The latter, whose task it was to prove in the last resort the truth of the Christian doctrine of renunciation, is useless, and therefore bad, for it diverts our energies from scientific speculations, and these are useful. Indeed, in order to live we must know the conditions of existence in the world, we must study nature. Although it be studied for a utilitarian purpose, it must be studied as it is, scientifically, to make of it an instrument for our pleasures or our comfort. To be willing to be deceived through slothful ignorance is to become bewildered a thousand times. It is just as in business in which honesty is the best policy; the most useful, the best thing to do is to know and follow nature as she is. But, once more, men do not care for science for the sake of science.

Hence, the terms "useful," "valid," or "good" are employed at that epoch in the two different senses I have pointed out in modern pragmatism, — in the moral, or social sense of the word "pragmatism," and from the more restricted point of view of the development of science. And now, what interests us is that there can be conflict between the two senses, and that science may show itself to be very anti-social as well as social, in its results, owing to the fact that the truth may be hostile to man; for example, certain laws of heredity, which, once known, suggest to certain persons to give up the struggle against the baneful tendencies within

them. In such cases knowledge (or science) is bad and can only be regarded as useful in the scientific sense.

So we see that ethics and science could be in conflict in the eighteenth century just as to-day science and pragmatism can. I shall take up this problem in the next chapter, and only remark here that the mere fact of the existence of the utilitarianism of the eighteenth century or that of the nineteenth century, and of the pragmatism of the twentieth century, independently formulated all three, proves in itself not merely that there may be conflicts, but that they in fact exist. If science and ethics agreed naturally, divergences would not occur, at least in so persistent a way; or, as Hébert remarks, apropos of pragmatism, "the ends would always seem to justify the means." (*Le Pragmatisme*, Paris, 1908, p. 56.) In sooth we ought to congratulate ourselves that the confusion between scientific validity and ethical or social validity has for some time been in existence. Without this confusion of the two, social validity would evidently not have looked with favor on scientific validity — that is to say, science — but it would have slain this last or at least obstructed its progress. This danger no longer exists; science for the sake of science has taken too deep root among us.

. . . . .

But to return from this digression to our argument. If there were really nothing behind pragma-

tism it would be astonishing that it could have been accepted by anybody. What is it then? Trailled up and ousted from all its strongholds (or rather Professor James himself recognizes them as untenable and abandons them) pragmatism is now taking refuge in its last entrenchment. After the passage cited above, "our theories are wedged and controlled as nothing else is," Professor James continues: "Yet sometimes alternative theoretic formulas are equally compatible with all truths we know and then we choose between them for subjective reasons."

These words give the key to the enigma. The mountain has brought forth its mouse. When two theories are equally uncertain, intellectually speaking, then pragmatism, profiting by the uncertainty, may slip in the "expediency" theory; or, when there exist departments of thought of which intellectualism cannot take possession (such as religion), pragmatism claims the right to install itself there. In short, when that severe guardian, intellectualism, is not at hand to oppose, and only then, pragmatism can give free reign to its "temperament." To conceal the meagreness of this final outcome, William James covers it with flowers of rhetoric: "We choose the kind of theory to which we are already partial; we follow 'elegance' or 'economy.' Clerk-Maxwell somewhere says it would be 'poor scientific taste' to choose the more complicated of two equally well-evidenced conceptions; and you will all agree with him. Truth in science is what gives us the

maximum possible sum of satisfactions, taste included; but considering both with previous truth and with novel fact is always the most imperious claimant." (*Pragmatism*, p. 217.)

Nobody will deny that there are still vast horizons open to pragmatic speculations thus conceived (leaving out of the account their encroachments); but to call this *philosophy*, when the proper place for it is just where philosophy ends, is not admissible.

James did not at first think of doing so, for reasons which I shall not at present attempt to fathom; he was led into it gradually. Indeed, originally, his pragmatism was not presented as a *philosophic* method, but simply as a method that might serve as a guide in the practical life, apropos of certain questions that philosophy cannot claim to solve, or which are still pending. As a philosophic method he frankly admitted intellectualism. It will not be a loss of time to compare his method of expressing himself in his famous essay *The Will to Believe*, and in his recent *Pragmatism*, the two books having an interval of ten years between them.

In the 1897 essay we read:

"The position that I defend is, in brief, this: *Our passionate nature not only lawfully may but must decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on*

*intellectual grounds; for to say, under such circumstances, 'Do not decide, but leave the question open,' is itself a passional decision, — just like deciding yes or not, — and is attended with the same risk of losing the truth"* (p. 11).

The italics are Professor James's. On page 30 the same subject is resumed.

"*In concreto*, the freedom to *believe* can only cover living options which the intellect of the individual cannot by itself resolve. . . ." We must avoid as much as possible (he says) these passional decisions — "as much so as the facts will allow. Wherever the option between losing truth and gaining it is not momentous, we can throw the chance of *gaining truth*, and at any rate save ourselves from any chance of *believing falsehood*, by not making up our minds at all till objective evidence has come" (pp. 19, 20).

That is to say, in certain questions — those of ethics and of faith for example — if the intellect cannot make a decision, choice becomes necessary, for life does not wait.

This is perfectly clear; it means that when science fails us, we need not renounce the will to live on that account; let us live on our beliefs. Now, no one would object to that. James has not said more than that in *Pragmatism*. He has said it in a different way, said it less clearly, and he has claimed much more. He has tried to make a *philosophic*

method out of what was a rule *of life*; and then, conscious of the difficulties of his enterprise, he has tried to dissemble them; that which was very clear has become very obscure. And this is the reason why the English and American reviews are full of articles by certain authors who, while generally applauding pragmatism, enter upon long-winded discussions to find out just what it means. They are seeking a philosophic method in it, which is not there at all, because, I repeat, pragmatism begins where philosophy ends.

#### IV

It would ill become me to limit myself to these theoretical considerations on pragmatism. To see if my criticisms are well founded let us examine the method in operation.

It is evident that a method, if it has any value, and if it is logically applied, must finally lead different seekers to the same philosophy. Undoubtedly there are great divergences of opinion in many systems; but then, these divergences can be discussed, for they are only more or less consistent applications of principles which, even though they may be false, are sure, for they are constant and impersonal; thus, one monism is truer, or, let us rather say, more consistent, than another monism; one materialism than another materialism. But with pragmatism it is different; the application of the principle of the expe-

dient is not methodical or impersonal, but, naturally of course, subjective. They tell us and tell us again, that the aim of pragmatism is to deliver philosophy from the coercion of system and to give freer play to what is called "temperament"; now, of course, the more play you give it, the surer you are of not agreeing with others. It is a fact (and not a chance one; I shall explain why elsewhere) that all pragmatists are akin by "temperament"; they all incline in a very marked manner to idealism; and yet, even under these conditions, disagreements abound. It would be only too easy for me to pick out instances and make use of them. M. Lalande, in his conscientious article in the *Revue philosophique* (February, 1906), has pointed out some. By choosing a concrete example from among them I wish to show, in order to confirm my theoretical refutation, that the pragmatists, if they want to reach a philosophical *entente*, are obliged not only to have recourse to a non-pragmatic method, but that this method is that of the very intellectualism against which they are undertaking to wage war.

Pragmatism has been enthusiastically adopted by Protestant theologians. By a method of procedure dear to the disciples of William James, Mr. Irwin-King supposes two cases opposed, the one to the other; neither metaphysics nor intellectualism being capable, they say, of deciding between them, the opportunist method must be called in. "Let us suppose two contradictory propositions: 'It is proper that the

wicked should be punished in the other world.' — 'It is repugnant to our feelings that the wicked should receive punishment hereafter.' Furthermore, suppose it to be impossible to prove one of these propositions in such a way as to render the other untenable; let us then permit the metaphysicians to discuss it together, and let us come to the results. In turn we shall assume the first proposition to be true and then the second. It is evident that the conduct of life of people would be different, given universal belief in the first proposition, from what it would be if everybody confessed to a feeling of repugnance toward punishment in the life beyond. It is also clear that the conduct of those who believed in such a punishment would be much more exemplary than that of people who did not believe in it at all. *From which it follows that the first proposition, being good in its effects, is true.*" (Cited by Lalande, *Revue philosophique*, p. 141.) On the other hand, Professor James, in discussing the problem of free will, and concluding for pragmatic reasons in favor of freedom, pronounces, most emphatically, against this idea of a punitive God:

"God alone can know our merits if we have any. The real ground for supposing free-will is indeed pragmatic, but it has nothing to do with this contemptible right to punish which has made such a noise in past discussions of the subject." (*Pragmatism*, p. 118.)

Now we must admit either that the differences of the two theories are *a priori* irreducible, or else that



one is preferable to the other. In the first case the pragmatists themselves will agree that their philosophy is rather adapted to the sowing of discord than the creation of harmony among thinkers. In the second case, which of the theories is preferable to the other and how determine it? Have Mr. King and Mr. James just different "temperaments," or can we explain their disagreement otherwise than by this word?

I note this, in the first place, that Mr. King — a theologian and perhaps pastor — takes into consideration the moral needs of the masses. With the people the old ethics of fear is always the most effective; let us not suppress it. Professor James, for his part, moving, as he does in a circle of cultivated persons, superior to the masses morally as well as intellectually, is much less inclined to look at humanity in its vulgar or degraded aspect; he would be glad to hold fast by belief in the natural goodness of humanity; men sin only through ignorance; a punitive God would be useless in the case of those so situated.<sup>1</sup> Thus each of these thinkers, starting from unlike experiences, arrives by unconscious reasoning at his theory.

From the point of view of the pragmatist doctrine,

<sup>1</sup> In his *Pluralistic Universe* (1909) William James writes, p. 29: "The theological machinery that spoke so livingly to our ancestors, with . . . its judicial morality and eschatology, its relish for rewards and punishments, its treatment of God as an external contriver and an intelligent moral governor sounds as odd to most of us as if it were some outlandish savage religion."

the two series of observations and the two courses of reasoning that follow them are absolutely and equally correct. There are people for whom a retributive God would be "expedient," others for whom he would not be. Strictly speaking, then, a pragmatist should reject neither one God nor the other, since both are "expedient," or "opportune." But this would be too simple, and would turn out to be compromising. Moreover, the problem which, it was claimed, was accurately solved, is not solved at all. We must go on then. To arrive at a solution the next query would be necessary: "Which opinion shall we choose? Shall we choose the God who corresponds to the needs of the majority or the one corresponding to the needs of the superior class?" It is not at all evident that pragmatism can elucidate this question any better than the former. To sacrifice the masses who can't help their inferiority is unjust; to sacrifice the élite is stupid.

Whichever way you look at it, pragmatism does not reach the goal.

Intellectualism, claim, would serve the purpose better. Ceasing to ask, "What is most expedient for man to believe?" (a question that leads to contradictory answers) it would ask, "Which God would be superior, the punitive God or the non-punitive God?" This leads us into the domain of metaphysical speculation, which pragmatism would like to avoid; but the man who is asking a reply to the problem as stated by the pragmatists is driven to

this kind of speculation perforce, through the bankruptcy of pragmatism. And, in fact, he will find in metaphysics a sure criterion to decide between the theory of James and that of King, as to which is the superior. Let us examine the matter then, — summing up, however, solely the ideas of the past. Theology passed on from a God of vengeance to a God of love. What was its reason? *Not* the pragmatic reason, since religion is for the masses as well as for superior souls, and since even yet the church and certain pragmatists admit that the punitive God is more useful than the other. The reason is that to the theologian or to the philosopher, reflecting independently of all pragmatic consideration, it appeared that the punitive God was a God *intellectually* inferior. In fact, just in proportion as philosophy turned away more from the study of the macrocosm to that of the microcosm, the more it realized how every act of a man is the inevitable result of circumstances plus his character. To render responsible and to punish for an act that cannot be helped is foolish. On the contrary, the more one comprehends a person the more one becomes charitable in one's judgments, the more one becomes just. To condemn an irresponsible man is not moral because it is intellectually false, because it is a logical mistake. A retributive God would be an intellectual monster. The fear of divine punishment may undoubtedly be a motive of action; but yet it is a motive behind which may or may not be found a reality. If this

reality actually exists, it would point to a God punishing men for acts which they could not help committing.

The man who has made such reflections as these cannot or will not any longer believe in a God of vengeance; or if, for reasons of another kind, he nevertheless believes in him, he will refuse to regard him as a superior being, he will refuse him his adoration. According to his "temperament" he will be abject or haughty toward him.

We have thus found a criterion, which pragmatism did not furnish, for estimating the relative value of the respective opinions of King and James. It is an intellectualist criterion. From which it results that *the pragmatism of a man is worth just as much as his intellect.*

## V

Such assistance as this — forced and really anti-pragmatic, — intellectualism cannot bestow except in the case of an isolated problem. When we consider pragmatism as a philosophical whole then intellectualism can intervene only to bring out in full light a failure. What becomes of the application of the pragmatic method when it is delivered over to its own proper resources? This is the next and last question.

Pragmatists make the needs of man their starting point; but they don't give themselves the trouble

even to set these needs in order; they just take them as they come, never troubling themselves about their relative value or their relations with each other. They have sometimes vague ideas about the beautiful, the good, and universal progress; but these are *mere words*; squeeze them a little and nothing remains. It is in this that pragmatism is inferior even to eclecticism. The latter, starting from psychological data, at least made the attempt to constitute a system of needs or of faculties — idealistic, sensational, sceptic, and mystic — the ensemble of which made the human being *one*. This unity could be contested; but there was at least something to discuss about. But you can't get a grip on pragmatism; when you try to seize it, it slips through your fingers. Under pretext of doing the generous thing by individualism, by life, and inspired by a suspicious dread of everything that savors of system and order, they cleave fast to chaos; the lack of co-ordination is raised to the height of a principle.<sup>1</sup> When there is

<sup>1</sup> Read this passage by William James (p. 148 of his *Pragmatism*): "The world is One, therefore, just so far as we experience it to be concatenated, *one* by as many definite conjunctions as appear. But then also *not one* by just as many definite *disjunctions* as we find. The oneness and the manyness of it thus obtain in respects which can be separately named. It is neither a universal pure and simple nor a multiverse pure and simple. And its various manners of being *one* suggest, for their accurate ascertainment, so many distinct programs of scientific work. Thus the pragmatic question, 'What is the oneness known as? What practical difference will it make?' saves us all from feverish excitement over it as a principle of sublimity and carries us forward into the stream of experience with a cool head." What's the use of talking any more about philosophy, seeking relations between phenomena, between ideas, between sciences?

no unity at the starting point, how should there be such anywhere? With this "method" every want that your "temperament" invites you to satisfy becomes the point of departure and the nucleus of a little system by itself, and it would be very surprising if all these little systems built up at random out of all the experiences and inspirations of the famous "temperament" should go, of themselves and judiciously, fit themselves together to form a grand philosophic whole (that is a co-ordinated whole). At the beck of that enchanter's wand shall ideas mutually contradictory, when in different historical systems, cease to contradict each other when they are introduced pell-mell into pragmatism? That is what we should like to know. Every one understands that in adopting any portion of a theory we implicitly adopt the premises on which it is based. In order to get the constituent parts of pragmatism to hold together requires, under these conditions, prodigies of skill, subtlety, mental acrobaticism. Intellectualism, the simple reason, no longer suffices. After every theory that you have established you have to re-focus your instrument or your method upon the next problem you tackle. Professor James himself shall furnish us luminous examples of this "method." Let us pass rapidly in review three of his theories.<sup>1</sup>

If we see a relation, very well; if we don't see it, it is very well again; in fact it's better, for it saves us a little of that thought which weighs so heavy on M. Papini's mind. (Article cited, p. 356.)

<sup>1</sup> I know that my readers will understand that if, by preference, I make William James my antagonist it is not thereby to facilitate my task

In the third lecture on "Pragmatism" James adopts Berkeley's method of treating the problem of substance. *Per se* it makes no difference whether substance or matter exists or not; all that is necessary is the sensation of substance. God can impart to us this sensation without matter really existing at all. Provided only all takes place as if it did exist, what matters it to us to know anything more on the subject? It is a useless problem. Away with it! Nevertheless, some philosopher with a Cartesian *temperament* might appear and say, "Pardon me, this problem does concern me, for certain consequences depend on the idea that I form to myself of God. This theory of Berkeley embarrasses me very much; for, in fine, either God has created a substance which is useless (and it is quite unworthy of him to create useless things), or else he deceives me in making me think it is matter; and even though it should be a thing of little importance for my material existence whether matter exists or not, the whole affair troubles me in my moral life. I do not relish a God who imposes on me, and I wish he were vindicated from the accusations contained in the terms of this dilemma." To this Professor James will reply: Leave alone your anthropomorphic notions of God; the idea of God is pragmatically useful,

but because he is the ablest representative of pragmatism. In spite of the modesty with which he always conceals himself behind others it is certain that, without James, pragmatism would not exist; and if he had only had as champions such dilettantes as Papini and certain others, this whole movement would have been still-born.

and it must be admitted without regard to certain "residual difficulties" outside of the pragmatic domain properly so called. (*Pragmatism*, p. 299.)

The same problem appears apropos of the moral consciousness. William James recalls Locke, who shows that we know nothing of the moral consciousness except its effects, nothing of its real existence. But belief in its real existence is useful to the progress of humanity; let us therefore believe in it, and not embarrass ourselves with metaphysics and anthropomorphisms.

In the same (the third) lecture William James proposes "another problem." The topic on the tapis now is to decide between the two hypotheses about the creation of the world, — the materialistic and the idealistic. In a few luminous pages James shows that, from the rationalistic point of view (premising that the result will be the same in either case, and assuming besides that the two theories render account of the facts equally well), it matters very little whether the world be a material or a divine product. But, he adds, it matters a good deal practically. "Theism and materialism, so indifferent when taken retrospectively, point, when we take them prospectively, to wholly different outlooks of experience." (*Ibid.* p. 103.) Which is it better for us to accept? Pragmatism answers: "Theism."

"The notion of God, however inferior it may be in clearness to those mathematical notions so current in



mechanical philosophy, has at least this practical superiority over them, that it guarantees an ideal order that shall be permanently preserved." (*Ibid.* p. 106.)

Very well. But where now are the eloquent discourses of the pragmatists: "No more metaphysics, no more anthropomorphism"? What is Mr. James doing here if not that which he has just condemned? Doubtless many will not perceive it, for when we speak of God in this day we mean naturally the Christian God, whom we naturally conceive as all powerful, all wise, and all good. But this power, this wisdom, and this goodness are far from being contained *a priori* in the idea of spiritual deity in opposition to matter. Before God acquires pragmatic value he must have certain "attributes."<sup>1</sup> Now the history of religions swarms with examples of gods inferior in power to other gods, who, themselves subordinate to fate, are intellectually brutes and morally detestable. The God postulated by William James's pragmatism is anthropomorphic like the others, except that the man who conceived it is superior (I considered this point a moment ago), and consequently he conceives a superior God.

So, then, anthropomorphism and metaphysics are out of place in such and such a discussion; beware of having recourse to them. But they are indispensable in this other; do not deprive yourself of

<sup>1</sup> An observation analogous to that expressed in the text by the writer inspired the critiques of Hoeffding and of Boutroux upon the conception of religion that appears in William James's writings.

their help. Really now, is not this an admirable method? *Long live pragmatism!*

But wait; here is a third theory proposed by James. God must be conceived as having benevolent intentions toward man and "guaranteeing an ideal order that shall be permanently preserved"; without that, he would be useless and not true. Yet the spectacle of nature and of society makes us ponder, and it is one of the claims of the pragmatists that they take facts more fully into consideration than did former philosophers; now some believed they had given a true account of the facts here to be taken into consideration by declaring that the world does not reveal a good God (any more than it does a bad God). But James and the pragmatists, considering the idea of God as expedient, cannot abandon it. Here then arises a conflict between facts and expediency, and neither of the two elements can be sacrificed. What are we going to do about it? — It is a very simple thing: merely readjust the focus of your philosophical apparatus. Facing out a poor play with a bold and cheerful face, the pragmatists will hold forth very much as follows:

God is good, and, undoubtedly, in this there lies an anthropomorphic notion indispensable to us. But one must not be *too* anthropomorphic; why should God be *wholly* good? After all, a God who would make everybody happy — let us leave such a dream to the Hindoos, or other metaphysicians of their

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stamp, who are afraid of life.<sup>1</sup> As for us, on the other hand, we have no objection to a God who lets men flounder about a little in a dangerous world and gives them the opportunity of vanquishing accumulated obstacles. (See *Pragmatism*, pp. 295–297.) It is true that the innocent suffer and that the unworthy often triumph. It is true that, as in a battle, the bullets hit or miss as chance directs; but never mind the carnage, the disasters, the strange madness of men, since some have the joy of merited triumph and thus human “dignity” is safeguarded. “Meliorism,” this is our doctrine, as opposed to an optimism which the facts contradict. In brief, we have no use for a God who could have conceived and created a world in which justice and dignity should both be perfectly satisfied; and even if you should chance not to be convinced by our reasoning, yet we, for our part, love our pragmatic God better as he is.

This strangely recalls the history of a certain fox, who, after having lost his tail, gave an elegant address to his fellow foxes on the ridiculousness of continuing to carry about a thing so evidently useless as the appendage of which an annoying accident had

<sup>1</sup> “The Hindoo and the Buddhist, for this is essentially their attitude, are simply afraid, afraid of more experience, afraid of life. And to men of this complexion, religious monism comes with its consoling words: ‘All is needed and essential — even you with your sick soul and heart. All are one with God, and with God all is well. . . .’ There can be no doubt that when men are reduced to their last sick extremity absolution is the only saving scheme. Pluralistic monism (which James opposes to monism, cf. *Pragmatism*, p. 160) simply makes their teeth chatter, it refrigerates the very heart in their breast.” (*Ibid.* pp. 292, 293.)

deprived him. However, never mind that. What I wish to insist on is the arbitrariness of what is called the pragmatic "method." Let us rapidly recapitulate. We have just seen that the same philosophy at one time condemned metaphysics and anthropomorphism (the problem of substance and of conscience); and at another itself made use of metaphysical speculation outright (the problem of spiritualism and materialism); then, when certain logical consequences of its metaphysical premises became troublesome (for they clashed with "realities") it quickly admitted the propriety of dosing its metaphysics according to the needs of the case (the problem of evil and suffering in the world).

Some one may here exclaim again: "But pragmatism has always denied that it is a system; its adherents have carefully avoided this term and have replaced it by 'philosophic movement,' 'attitude,' 'genetic method,' or what not." Precisely; these are the measures they take to extricate themselves from embarrassment. The device is inspired either by shrewd cunning or by consciousness of the weakness of their position, and cannot be tolerated in a serious discussion. "A door must be either open or closed," and a philosophy must either be a systematic philosophy or not be at all. Call pragmatism by whatever name you please, if the thing itself does not stand for ideas having some relation to each other, then why are they grouped together? Is it

so, that we ask method of a banker, a grocer, a laundress, and do not dare to ask it of a philosopher? One does not like to put up with this kind of jesting. What the pragmatists would really like is that people should benevolently consider their philosophy as a system but not regard them, the pragmatists, as bound to fulfil the conditions requisite in the case.

The criticism of pragmatism made on every hand, that it is an exaggerated individualism, authorizing all kinds of fantastic vagaries, is perfectly justified.<sup>1</sup> By warrant of what authority, or in the name of what, shall we limit the claims of any individual desire or need whatever? Professor James himself insists strongly on the rights of "temperament":

"Pragmatism is willing to take anything, to follow either logic or the senses, and to count the humblest and most personal experiences. She will count mystical experiences if they have practical consequences.

<sup>1</sup> What ought to be said regarding that phase of the discussion has been well expressed and concisely in the excellent article of Professor J. E. Creighton, "The Nature and Criterion of Truth" (*Philosophical Review*, XVII, No. 6): "As a protest against the attitude of the free lance who asserts his right to make his own standpoint and method, I am insisting that no such individual or arbitrary procedure offers any hope, or has any genuine title to the name of philosophy" (p. 596). And again: "The view, then, which I am endeavoring to state, and which I think has been established by the historical development of philosophical conceptions, maintains that *the relation between the mind and reality is essentially inner and organic*. Experience throughout all its modes is the expression of this unity in difference." The function of thought is "to determine *concretely and still in universal terms the real world*" (p. 600). (Italics are mine.) See also "Experience and Thought" by the same author (*Philosophical Review*, XV, No. 5), especially pp. 488 and 489.

She will take a God who lives in the very dirt of private fact if that should seem a likely place to find him." (*Pragmatism*, p. 80; cf. also pp. 71, 72, 153, etc.)

Why, then, do they speak of "impudent slander," and vehemently protest when others do no more than accept their own statements? (*Ibid.* p. 233.)

There is one misunderstanding, however, that must be avoided; it is a mistake to think that pragmatism favors more the gratification of our low desires than it does our superior ones. Since it is said that pragmatism justifies everything without discrimination, many persons have taken pleasure in believing that it particularly favors the gross appetites. This is evidently unjust. William James devotes all of his final lecture to the refutation of certain bewildered minds, and to showing that, as for him, it has led him to religion. Of course no one believes that pragmatism could ever direct William James to any but lofty and generous aims; moreover, those who are fond of practising the principles of a low and vile philosophy are not often those who enjoy writing discussions about their doctrines. But it is none the less true, and may be used as a weapon against pragmatism, that you cannot find in it any principle that forbids *a priori* a mean inferior temperament from cultivating with good show of right an inferior pragmatism and exalting its merits. Pragmatism is a little in the same predicament, in this respect, as epicureanism, which as lived and

practised by an Epicurus, or a Lucretius, has nothing offensive about it; or as utilitarianism, which the pen of John Stuart Mill renders noble and refined. Yet of both these systems others may make a different use. We are led once more to the opinion expressed a few pages previously: a pragmatism is worth just what the man who formulated it is worth. Now a philosophy ought to be judged from an impersonal point of view. But of all philosophies pragmatism fulfils this condition with least satisfaction. Indeed, epicureanism with its principle of "the greatest amount of pleasure possible," still afforded matter for discussion; and in utilitarianism you have the principle "the greatest happiness possible for the greatest number," which still more limited the imagination. Neither the one system nor the other was characterized by precision; but there was an attempt at it; its necessity was recognized. Pragmatism has none of these formulas; "the expedient," "the opportune," that is all. As I have already observed, Mr. James confesses, in his eighth lecture — on the whole the only one in which he stops constructing the theory of pragmatism in order to offer us pragmatic theories — that he speaks only for himself.

Of all the philosophies up to this time proposed to men, pragmatism is the least philosophic.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DEWEY CASE<sup>1</sup>

AMONG the representatives of pragmatism in America, there is one whose position is not very clearly defined. Pragmatists have good reasons to claim him as being one of them, while he himself has good reason for keeping somewhat on the defensive. He has reiterated his hesitations once more in his criticism of William James's book. (*The Journal of Philosophy*, February 13, 1908. See especially p. 96.) The "Dewey case" is interesting and characteristic. It is worth while to devote one chapter to a close examination of it.

Professor Dewey is not exactly obscure, but from a French point of view, at least, he is certainly neither simple nor easy. I have wondered, at times, whether the endless windings of his philosophical thought have not contributed much to gain for him the enviable reputation of being "the most scientific" rep-

<sup>1</sup> I am aware that Professor Dewey and his disciples claim that he was misunderstood in this chapter. As, however, they have so far refused to *prove* it, I am not able to make any changes. Whatever few *precise* accusations they have consented to formulate, I have answered in *The Journal of Philosophy* in reply to Mr. Moore's *Discussion* of May 27, 1909. Moreover, in Appendix A of this volume, I have added a few words regarding the "Argument of Silence."



representative of pragmatism. In studying more closely his theories, one understands that Professor Dewey hesitates — whether consciously or unconsciously I would not venture to say — between two ways of thinking which fundamentally contradict each other, and that he devotes a great part of his strength to conciliate them; thus the real meaning of his “tours, détours, et retours” becomes apparent.

There is very distinctly at the bottom of his speculations a preoccupation similar to that which one finds in his brothers in pragmatism; namely, to bring nearer ethics and scientific truths on the domain of logic. The title of his long and famous essay, *Logical Conditions of a Scientific Treatment of Morality* (Chicago, 1903), is a complete program by itself. Only, instead of demonstrating that moral judgments have the same characteristics as the scientific judgments (as one would have expected, and as every one else would have done, it seems, who wanted to show that moral judgments can really be “scientifically treated”), Professor Dewey chooses to do just the reverse; the first part of his essay is destined to show that scientific judgments have the characteristics of the moral judgments.

His conception of the “moral judgment” — which might, perhaps, sound somewhat old-fashioned to some of us — is the one he finds prevailing all around him in the Anglo-Saxon world, namely:

1. Moral judgments are individual, *i. e.*, aim at

solving particular cases, and since each case is individual, the value of those judgments is absolute, not relative; as opposed to scientific judgments, which are usually considered as being universal, *i. e.*, good to solve not only individual cases, but any other similar cases: in science there are universal cases, people think, not in ethics. Now, says Professor Dewey (anxious, I repeat it, not to reduce moral judgments to scientific judgments, but, on the contrary, scientific judgments to moral judgments), this is erroneous. A scientist is looking for general laws, it is true; but at the same time he wants to solve individual cases or problems; laws are not science, but only a means to get science; and if a law does not solve a specific problem, the scientist will change the law and not the problem. Thus science, like ethics, aims at the individual case.

2. As applied to practical life, moral judgments imply the intervention of the personality of the one who judges, as one factor in the judgment. And here again, scientific judgments, if one only studies them closely enough, are like moral judgments; they imply a personal intervention, or action, on the part of the one who judges, (*a*) in the classification of possible predicates, (*b*) in the selection of the individual cases to be studied to solve a problem, (*c*) in the choice of the means for verifying an hypothesis, either by experience or by demonstration. In those three operations the personality of the judger, or, as Dewey says, his "character," modifies

the judgment, guides, suggests. Thus: "If the use of scientific resources, of technique of observation and experiment, of systems of classification, etc., in directing the act of judging (and thereby fixing the content of the judgment), depends upon the interest and disposition of the judger, we have only to make such dependence explicit, and the so-called scientific judgment appears definitely as a moral judgment" (p. 14).<sup>1</sup>

All this can be expressed in the following formula: The so-called scientific judgments, or purely objective judgments, being an abstraction without real existence, it is not possible to speak of scientific judgments which have not at the same time the characters of the moral judgments. Or, still more briefly: Scientific judgments exist only as moral judgments. And the conclusion would be: Since scientific judgments have the fundamental characters of moral judgments — aim at individual cases and imply the intervention of personality — moral judgments are as good, *as scientific*, as are scientific judgments.

So far the spirit is altogether the same as the one prevailing in Messrs. James and Schiller: man cannot *not be* subjective in his judgments and opinions. Thus, if his moral judgments are subjective, they

<sup>1</sup> Except when otherwise stated, I quote from the essay on *Logical Conditions of a Scientific Treatment of Morality*. I add that the complete and somewhat subtle demonstration which has just been summarized, in order to render clearer the following pages, will be found on p. 9 ff. and p. 26.

are worth as much as his scientific judgments (which latter are as a matter of course scientific). Only the way of expressing things is more scholastic with Professor Dewey.

But once this point has been reached, the ground becomes slippery; for there is only a short distance to go before one feels like saying, Since the subjective element really *creates* our judgments (scientific or moral), since it is the unavoidable condition of judgment, it is *therefore* indispensable, and it is *therefore* the really important element. And then, one takes still another step: but then the moral judgment, in which the subjective element is more marked, as a matter of fact, than in the scientific judgment, ought *therefore*, in case of conflict or hesitation, to be considered superior to the scientific judgment. There is the explanation of Mr. Schiller's paradox, that in case one has absolutely to choose between irrationalism and intellectualism, the first shall have the preference with the pragmatist. (*Humanism*, p. 5.) Those arguments are obviously false.<sup>1</sup> Scientific judgments are, perhaps, all subjective, but it does not follow that they will be better for it. To maintain that subjectivism being unavoidable is indispensable, and thus, that the more there will be of it, the better for our judgments, holds still less. *But* all this is "indispensable" for pragmatism, which proposes to confer upon man the right to choose or to give out what truth shall be

<sup>1</sup> This is discussed in detail in the first chapter of this volume.

according to what is opportune, instead of simply ascertaining it.

To come back now to Professor Dewey: as far as I have summarized his paper he has not decided yet for pragmatism; he has only reduced scientific judgments to moral judgments, thus the logic of science to the logic of ethics. But will he stay there? It seems that he ought to; for, to reduce the logic of science to the logic of ethics, or the logic of ethics to the logic of science, is it not practically the same? Is not, in both cases, the logic of ethics incorporated into the logic of science? It seems that the only thing that remains to do, for a logician in the strict sense of the word, would be to show that this subjectivism, pointed out by Mr. Dewey in scientific and moral judgments, does not impair their value, because (one must be well aware of the fact) scientific and moral judgments can be equally bad, as well as equally good.

But Professor Dewey does not care about that. Consciously or unconsciously, he ignores this big question. He has something else in view. Let it be recalled once more that the title of his essay is *Logical Conditions of a Scientific Treatment of Morality*. From the wording of this title we must infer that in his mind there exist *special* logical conditions for ethics (or "morality" — I confess that the reason for the selection of this word is not clear to me), for nobody would dream of writing about special logical conditions for physics or chem-

istry. There are, of course, in each domain of science, special conditions for scientific researches, but no special "logical" conditions. Professor Dewey, therefore — in view of a purpose which he does not render clear — does not wish to affirm logical identity between scientific and moral judgments, but only *equivalence* in value. In fact, he is going to follow in the steps of pragmatists like Messrs. James and Schiller; after having made great efforts to bring nearer together science and ethics (or morality), he is going to devote his efforts now to drawing a sharp distinction between them. Only, he is more clever, or more cautious, than, for example, Mr. Schiller; he is not going to risk and claim a *superiority* of moral judgments over scientific judgments, for this drives one to a corner, namely, that the irrational — or a-rational — is superior to the rational; moreover, the argument of Mr. Schiller is altogether too easily seen through. No, when Professor Dewey crosses the Rubicon in his turn he will cross it elsewhere; taking it for granted that he has proved the equivalence, he will claim further nothing more but the *independence* of moral judgments with regard to scientific judgments.

This cleverness, however, will not go a very long way. Thanks to a bold trip to logic, Mr. Schiller had gotten rid of the latter and run away; he was now free. But Professor Dewey, who conscientiously refuses to part company with logic — a praiseworthy attempt, after all — will soon find out that logic is

stronger than he is, and that the dangerous partner whom he has chosen is simply going to prevent him from ever reaching his goal, a morality which is logically independent from science. He will finally do exactly the reverse of what he intended, namely, he will reduce the logic of ethics to the logic of science.

This is the way he establishes a difference between the two logics: While the intrusion of the personal element (or "character") is without practical results in the scientific judgments, in the moral judgments, on the contrary, this personal element "qualitatively colors the meaning of the situation"; it has an actual bearing on conduct; a moral judgment is almost an act. Thus, thinks Dewey, since, owing to circumstances, the personal element = zero in the scientific judgments, it is useless, "logically" speaking, to take it into account, while it is impossible to ignore it in moral judgments when we know it to be a fact that it does play an important part: "Character as a practical condition becomes *logical* when its influence is preferential in effect — when instead of being a uniform and impartial condition of any judgment it is, if left to itself (or unstated), a determinant of *this* content-value of judgment rather than that" (p. 161).

Is not all this rather extraordinary? If subjectivism (or "character") = zero, logically, in the scientific judgments, what is the meaning of those long pages and elaborate arguments of the first half

of the essay in order to prove that subjectivism *is* there and *acts* in the same manner as in the moral judgments?

One of two things must be true: Either Mr. Dewey means to say that in the moral judgments there is something which is not to be found in the scientific judgments, namely, subjectivism; but, in this case, he flatly contradicts himself, since the first part of his essay is written to prove that there *is* subjectivism in the scientific judgments as well as in the moral judgments. He tells us now that when the action of "character" (or of subjectivism) becomes "preferential" in its effect, then the judgment *by this fact* becomes logical. But what then? As this action of character is not "preferential" in the scientific judgment, have we to believe that the scientific judgment is, perhaps, no longer "logical"? Unless one means to make fun of logic, such affirmations cannot be taken seriously.

Or Mr. Dewey means to say that there is a minimum of subjectivism in scientific judgments, while the proportion is simply greater in moral judgments; but then we have to deal with a mere difference in quantity, not in quality, not a difference in the nature of the judgment; if the action of the "character" is simply more complex in the moral judgments than in the scientific judgments, this is not enough to differentiate them "logically." And then moral judgments are reduced to scientific judgments. — One must choose.



Now, on the other hand, Professor Dewey cannot choose the second alternative, since he started with the idea of proving the opposite. On the other hand, Dewey cannot *not* choose the second alternative, since he speaks of "logical conditions of a scientific treatment of morality"; unless one adopts in ethics the same logic which is adopted in science, one cannot speak of a "scientific" treatment of morality.

Professor Dewey has finally accepted the second alternative — and he sticks to it. The second half of his essay, therefore, contradicts the first; as was to be expected. Here is his definition of "character" — everything depends on this definition: "The term 'character' denotes this complex continuum of interactions [*i. e.*, interactions of natural dispositions, of technique, of knowledge, of habits of thought, etc.] in its office of influencing final judgment" (p. 14). This plainly indicates that for Mr. Dewey "character" is an effect before being a cause, a product (determined by considerations concerning the future as well as by circumstances in the past), and which acts only as a product strictly determined; "character" can be treated "logically" in the same sense as any factor in any scientific judgment. All attempts to differentiate between moral and scientific judgments are doomed to failure after that.

To convince ourselves that such is really the point of view adopted by Professor Dewey in the end, we

need only summarize the end of his essay. It is true that here and there the author seems to hesitate in developing his ideas; it is the pleading of a determinist, who is embarrassed by free-will reminiscences. Professor Dewey, at times, even takes advantage of terms having a double meaning; especially when he considers the "scientific treatment" as serving "to control the formation of judgment" (p. 14). "To control" may mean to interfere in an active fashion, independently of the scientific factors taken into consideration or it may mean simply that, knowing the factors which may enter into the determination, *i. e.*, being conscious of them, this consciousness only adds a new factor (just as determined as the others) in the formation of the judgment. Professor Dewey proves the second sense to be true, *but then* speaks as if he had demonstrated the first. It seems clear, therefore, to one who judges from the spirit and not from the letter, that Professor Dewey, in his conception of morality, finally adopts the traditional scientific conception of judgment.

He wants to prove this: That an ethical judgment "effects an absolutely reciprocal determination of the situation judged, and of the character or disposition which is expressed in the act of judging" (p. 17).

To appreciate, or to form, or to control, moral judgments, three conditions are required: (1) One must classify them, (2) one must know exactly the *psychological conditions*, the "character" of the

judge, and also know (3) the *social conditions* in which the judgment takes place, "the situation judged."

(1) To *classify*: Mr. Dewey wishes to define clearly the domain of ethics; he proposes to have a sort of system of ethical "categories" corresponding to the categories of time, space, matter, etc., in physics. One must, for instance, agree on the meaning of the term "moral standard," whether it has any connection with happiness, or with the ideal of perfection; thanks to this we might then discuss profitably questions of ideal, of obligation, of responsibility, and of others. The writer confesses that he does not see very well the bearing of such theoretical discussions. What does Professor Dewey exactly mean with those categories anyway? Does he wish, after all, to persuade us that there remains somewhere an essential difference between the logic of science and that of morality; or does he simply mean to point out the fact that the domain of moral researches is different from that of physics, for example, or other sciences? In the second case, it is rather useless to write a chapter to prove so evident a thing; in the first case, those "logical" connections between ethics and science, which precisely he wanted to bring out, are not made clear. The only example offered, that of the "moral standard," gives no light; one does not see whether he speaks of an absolute and imperative standard, or of a relative and changing one. If the "absolute" standard is

meant, where does it come from? is it metaphysical? is it the old "moral sense"? But, then, what is the use of a "scientific" treatment of morality? Psychological factors and social factors cannot affect it in the least. And if the "relative" standard is meant, if the standard depends on the *milieu* and on character as determined by contingencies, how can we define the "category" of standard otherwise than by the mere attribute of existence? Then, here again, we have a very superfluous chapter. One thing seems clear to me in all this: Mr. Dewey wants to bring ethics nearer to physical sciences, to prevent arbitrariness in definitions and concepts; in short, to confer upon ethics the logical qualities of natural sciences. But "categories" are useless for that purpose; even in physics, the categories of space, time, matter, are of secondary importance. No professor of physics, as far as we know, discusses them as an indispensable introduction to his special subject. They are questions pertaining to the theory of knowledge, or, possibly, to psychology, rather than to physics. In the same manner "moral categories" would have only a distant relation with ethics, even if conceived as scientifically as physics. If not conceived in this way, things may be different; but then the parallelism between moral categories and scientific categories, which Professor Dewey has in mind, exists no longer.

(2) Professor Dewey's demonstration becomes much more satisfactory when he deals with the *psy-*

*chological conditions* of moral judgment. The intrinsic logic of his premises prevents him from going astray: "Since character is a fact entering into any moral judgment passed, ability of control depends upon our power to state character in terms of generic relation of conditions, which conditions are detachable from the pressure of circumstance in the particular case. Psychological analysis is the instrument by which character is transformed from its absorption in the values of immediate experience into an objective, scientific fact. It is, indeed, a statement of experience in terms of its modes of control of its own evolving" (p. 19). Thus, if we isolate by analysis the factor of "character," we are able to show that it is determined in its essence, and determined also in its determination, *i. e.*, in its manner of judging. We cannot conceive of it in any other way. Dewey even proposes to make an "inventory" of the manners in which the different psychological dispositions do influence our judgment; and the results thus obtained "if true at all, have exactly the same logical validity that is possessed by any 'physical law'" (p. 20).

If, after that — be it that he does not realize the consequences of his premises or be it that he does not want to see them — Professor Dewey declares that this analysis applied to experience allows us to "control" judgments "instead of merely indulging in them" (p. 21), this is of no importance; we have pointed out above the double meaning of the term

"to control." Supposing that Professor Dewey take it here in the sense of active intervention, independently of the scientific conditions in judgment, nobody else will be deceived by this amphibology after the words which we have just quoted from Mr. Dewey's own demonstration. Again, if Professor Dewey claims that, while psychology shows to us that the moral judgment is determined by contingencies, psychology tells us *nothing* of the *content* of the moral ideal, nor that "consequently there must be recourse to transcendental considerations — to metaphysics" (p. 21), this alters in no way the scientific problem; the idea of an ideal may be a factor, to be sure, but it becomes one only after it has entered the scientific or psychological net of actions and interactions. Moreover, how would it be possible to conciliate this appeal to metaphysics with the following words, a few lines farther down: "There is no question here of idea as immediately experienced. Only living, not metaphysics any more than psychology, can 'give' an ideal in this sense" (p. 22).

(3) *Sociological conditions.* "Character," we have just seen, can be scientifically defined by us, therefore it must be scientifically determined. Now this factor of character, Professor Dewey goes on to say, combines in an "absolute reciprocal determination" with the factor of the "situation judged"; and the scientific and determined nature of the latter is even more evident than that of character. To bring

about a good moral judgment what do we need? In reply, Mr. Dewey says: "A social science which will analyze a content as a combination of elements in the same way that psychological analysis determines an act as a set of attitudes" (p. 23). It is, moreover, impossible to observe very strictly the distinction between psychological and sociological conditions because the social influences here taken into consideration come into action only in as far as they influence the judger, *i. e.*, in as far as they become psychological. Professor Dewey, therefore, wishes here only to emphasize what he calls the "continuity of the scientific judgments," namely, the interaction social, biological, physical, etc., phenomena when they bear upon the moral judgment. "Any scene of action which is social is *also* cosmic or physical. It is also biological. Hence the absolute impossibility of ruling out the physical and biological sciences from bearing upon ethical science. If ethical theory require, as one of its necessary conditions, ability to describe in terms of itself the situation which demands moral judgment, any proposition, whether of mechanics, chemistry, geography, physiology, or history, which facilitates and guarantees the adequacy and truth of the description, becomes in virtue of that fact an important auxiliary of ethical science" (p. 24). Professor Dewey opposes this conception to that of materialists and of transcendentalists. Materialists, like those described there, exist no longer, so we may ignore them. Transcenden-

talists are more interesting for us. It has been shown that in discussing the psychological conditions of moral judgments Mr. Dewey still hesitated whether or not metaphysics had to be given up altogether. This time he no longer hesitates: "The fact that advance of physical and biological science so profoundly modifies moral problems, and hence moral judgments, and hence once more moral values, may serve as an argument against transcendental ethics — since, according to the latter, such obvious facts would be impossibilities" (p. 24).

Where now, in all this, is there any room left for a pragmatic element? where the thinnest crack by which it might slip in? Since a moral judgment is the result of an "absolutely reciprocal determination" of the judger and of the situation judged, the moral ideal itself is only a product of this combination and must vary from epoch to epoch; and in its variations it depends strictly upon the circumstances in which the judger happens to be with regard to the situation judged. A metaphysical ideal which would not be determined in the scientific sense of the word, is both impossible and useless; there is no room for it. The moral ideal is brought about "naturally" by the combination of the two above-mentioned factors; the ideal of to-morrow will be formed necessarily from the ideal of to-day. Now, if I become conscious of this mechanism, I may see where the ethics of to-morrow is aiming, and I may favor (or thwart) its course; but in this very action



of favoring (or thwarting), the element of "reciprocal determination," which can be scientifically foreseen, is far from lacking.

If the method proposed by Mr. Dewey is conscientiously applied, the results reached will be the same as those of Lévy-Brühl in his *La morale et la science des mœurs*, he himself following in the steps of Durkheim's *Méthode sociologique*. It is not a matter of mere chance if on both sides of the Atlantic, and without seeming to know of each other, those men agree so well on a theory which precludes pragmatism. Is it not as if one were reading Dewey — only in a style more direct, more transparent — when one comes across these words of Lévy-Brühl: "La conception nouvelle des rapports de la pratique et de la théorie morale implique qu'il y a une réalité sociale objective, comme il y a une réalité physique objective, et que l'homme, s'il est raisonnable, doit se comporter à l'égard de la première comme de l'autre, c'est à dire s'efforcer d'en connaître les lois pour s'en rendre maître autant qu'il lui sera possible." (*La morale et la science des mœurs*, 2d ed., p. 24.)

Only Lévy-Brühl is more determined, more conscious of the bearing of his method: "D'une façon générale, notre conception de la nature s'agrandit et s'enrichit chaque fois qu'une portion de la réalité qui nous est donnée dans l'expérience se 'désobjective' pour 's'objectiver.'" (*Pragmatism*, p. 29.) "Just like Professor Dewey, Lévy-Brühl wants to complete the

psychological analysis of the judger by the sociological analysis of the situation judged: "Au lieu d'interpréter les phénomènes sociaux du passé à l'aide de la psychologie courante, ce serait au contraire la connaissance scientifique — c'est à dire sociologique — de ces phénomènes qui nous procurerait peu à peu une psychologie plus conforme à la diversité réelle de l'humanité présent et passée."<sup>1</sup>

Everywhere Lévy-Brühl very plainly expresses his theories and his results, when with Mr. Dewey the reader constantly feels caution. The first frankly states: "Une science ne peut être normative en tant que théorique" (p. 14). And what the second wanted so much to show was that a science *can* be normative while theoretical; but the power of logic finally carried him one way, though his intention was evidently the other way. Read his note to page 13 (there are very interesting statements some-

<sup>1</sup> *La morale et la science des mœurs*, p. 79. There are even certain concessions to popular moral conceptions which can be found in Lévy-Brühl as well as in Mr. Dewey. Thus for instance, the first says: "De même que nous avons de presque toute la réalité donnée dans l'espace deux représentations parfaitement distinctes, l'une sensible et subjective, l'autre conceptuelle et objective; de même que le monde des sons et des couleurs est aussi l'objet de la science physique, . . . de même nous pouvons posséder en même temps deux représentations de la réalité morale, l'une subjective, l'autre objective" (p. 31). Such a concession is useless as long as we deal in a scientific manner with our topic. (Lévy-Brühl had already adopted the distinction in his first book.) The conception of a *morale conditionnelle* introduced by A. Naville in the discussion (*Revue philosophique*, December, 1906) suffices to clear the field, and allows us once for all to ignore popular conceptions of ethics in science. I may add that the distinction made by Lévy-Brühl does not sidetrack the discussion at all in his work.

times in Professor Dewey's notes!) in which, after his attempt to reduce scientific judgments to moral judgments, or, in other words, the theoretical judgments to normative or pragmatic judgments, he refuses "to draw sharp lines between philosophy (*his* philosophy) as merely normative and the sciences as merely descriptive." Why does he refuse? Is it because he sees the inevitable consequences?

We are now in a position to understand the fundamental difference between Messrs. James and Dewey in the problem under consideration; both start with the same end in view, which is to shake off intellectualism; both, again, when they examine conscientiously the problem, are forced, as they want to remain logical, to adapt their pragmatic theories to the requirements of reason. *But* Professor James proves specially anxious not to lose sight of the end which he had proposed to his speculations, and more anxious to save the practical results than to offer a mere philosophical argument; thus, he remains true to the flag of pragmatism. Professor Dewey, on the contrary, proves especially anxious to offer a fine and smooth argument, and thus allows himself to be driven away by his speculations from the purpose he had at first in view; he finds himself, at the end, to be the defender of a theory exactly opposite to that which he had intended to prove: and this just because he is the more conscientious of the two.

From this point of view, therefore, people are

right enough when they maintain that Mr. Dewey is the most philosophical mind among the leading pragmatists, only, his philosophy is at the expense of his pragmatism.

It is well known that Mr. Peirce found himself caught in the same difficulty. He has admitted it, and the famous passage in Baldwin's *Dictionary* has been often quoted, in which he refuses to go all the way with too buoyant disciples. One ought now to compare Peirce's statement with a curious note of Professor Dewey's — another case where a very significant statement is relegated to a foot-note: "The point of view which is here presented is, of course, distinctly pragmatic. I am not quite sure, however, of the implications of certain forms of pragmatism. They sometimes seem to imply that a rational or logical statement is all right up to a certain point, but has fixed external limits, so that at critical points recourse must be had to considerations which are distinctly of an irrational or extra-logical order. . . . It is just the opposite which I am endeavoring to sustain, *viz.* . . ." (p. 10). Yes, of course. There is the dilemma precisely: Professor James sees well enough — without heralding it too loud — that in following logic to the end, there is no pragmatism left, and in order to be allowed to remain a pragmatist, it is necessary, at one certain point — to jump.<sup>1</sup> While Professor Dewey, who obstinately persists

<sup>1</sup> "Materialism and agnosticism [read simply 'determinism' even were they true, could never gain universal and popular acceptance,

in remaining true to logic, keeps of pragmatism nothing but the word, and lands in the *science des mœurs*.

for they both, alike, give a solution of things which is irrational to the practical third of our nature" (*Will to Believe*, p. 126). *Even were they true*, a man who would really believe in the possibility of proving logically that they are *not true*, would not have recourse to such hypothetical argumentation.

## PART II

### PRAGMATISM AND MODERNISM

*Quand la populace se mêle de raisonner, tout est perdu. — VOLTAIRE.*

#### CHAPTER I

##### SOCIAL PHENOMENA EXPLAINING THE APPEARANCE OF A PRAGMATIC PHILOSOPHY

- I. In a democratic country and epoch philosophic thought is not free, for we must take into consideration the practical consequences of our theories. Philosophy is less free to-day everywhere than it formerly was; but in America, a country without traditions of an intellectual aristocracy, it is still less free than elsewhere. Moreover, in America, a rich country, but the wealth of which must come chiefly from the soil, there is need of a philosophy believing in action; a determinist, or fatalistic philosophy would not be tolerated. Proofs that this is the case: The philosophy of William James reflects exactly this way of looking at things; how he seeks to justify it. — Special features (nuances) that distinguish American from English pragmatism: Prof. James speaks to a whole people who are already convinced; he sets forth his doctrines with serenity well assured of sympathetic audiences. Mr. Schiller addresses a restricted audience, a university and intellectual audience, and is obliged to assume a more polemical attitude toward intellectualism. Prof. James grows enthusiastic over the idea of risks in life; Mr. Schiller rather points out the danger of non-pragmatism, etc.; Mr. Papini sings the same tune as Mr. Schiller, only in a higher key.
- II. On the other hand, to counterbalance the consequences that

might follow this philosophy of success, which threatens to lead to Hobbes's *homo homini lupus*, we must have a curb or check. Religion is the only efficacious curb. Accordingly, the obligation on pragmatism is to be religious. For conscience without religion, without God to ratify the voice of conscience by reward or recompense, is insufficient; men would soon content themselves with the mere appearance of virtue. Fallacy of the theory which maintains that dogma disappears. There are pragmatic dogmas and indifferent dogmas; only the latter are relegated to the background. Facts which support this view: Politicians, magistrates, financiers, manufacturers, the intellectual class, all support and countenance religion. Ethical societies in their rôle of opponents of the churches are a failure. Illustrations drawn from the financial panic of 1907-1908. Here again Professor James reflects faithfully this aspect of the pragmatic spirit; at least, when he speaks as a pragmatist, this utilitarian side of religion is the only one he brings out. — Points of difference between the French and the English pragmatists in this matter.

FROM all that precedes, we are forced to conclude that there must be something more at the base of the astonishing success of pragmatism than philosophic principles. If, from the point of view of thought, its worth is so little, how explain its triumph? The answer is that special and accidental circumstances have, so to speak, forced the hand of philosophers.

## I

To seek out these accidental occurrences and present them to view is the object of this chapter.

I observe, in the first place, that the great stronghold of pragmatism is America; it has some friends

in England; but, in spite of a certain renewal of interest in ethical questions noticeable everywhere in these days, it has not taken deep root anywhere else. Now civilization in America is the daughter of that of Europe, an emancipated daughter, by the way, but who has emancipated herself very rapidly and very normally. I say this without any mental reservation whether of blame or of approbation; we need not ask whether evolution has been retrogressive or progressive. What does interest us I shall now state.

The relations between philosophy and life have changed during the last few centuries. It is needless to say there has always been reciprocal action, mutual influence, of the one on the other. For instance, philosophers have always to some extent adapted their philosophy to the wants of the people. But formerly all depended on them (the philosophers). Of their speculations only what they wished, and as they wished it, reached the masses; they had the prudence to cultivate in the minds of said masses a healthful — I was going to say “pragmatic” — ignorance, reserving for their own special meditation the most considerable and the most delicate part of the domain of thought; they had their special language, the Latin, which screened them from the effects of their indiscretions. To-day, on the contrary, their books are written in the popular tongues; thanks to the development of printing, compulsory education, journalism, public libraries, etc., these



philosophic theories filter down to the very dregs of the populace of every nation; that means that they have a much greater *practical* importance. Owing to this the philosopher has a *moral* responsibility that he did not formerly know. In other words, by automatic action, the freedom of thought granted to the masses exactly equals the freedom of thought taken from the philosophers; that is a law of nature; the degrading effects of it are making themselves felt everywhere.

But, as I have just said, there exist also in a country like America special and aggravating circumstances. Among Europeans, the existence of deeply rooted traditions of life — which are only habits passed on from generation to generation — diminishes the influence of thought and guarantees still to philosophic speculation a certain measure of freedom. In America, a land without traditions, men act more as they please, and philosophic thought is less free in proportion. Nay more, in America we have to do with a nation in a constant state of creation. The American with one or two generations of native ancestors back of him does not reproduce himself; increase of population is due to immigration. This renders, therefore, the formation of traditions, even for the future, extremely difficult if not impossible, — another cause (this) of the considerable practical cast and weight of philosophical ideas and the proportional diminution of freedom of thought. Finally, America has immense natural

resources to develop and cultivate; she is rich, but only on condition of exerting a formidable energy; her climate is trying and changeable, and the earth only yields its foison of wealth (I mean mineral resources as well as the product of agriculture) as the result of compulsion.

Under such circumstances a people does not choose its conception of life, or let us say its philosophy. Its thinkers, if it is so fortunate as to be granted any, will not be able to escape the influence of this atmosphere. Ideas and principles purely speculative will be nothing, the consequences and the results of theories will be everything. A philosophy which should infer, in any part whatever of its system, a limit to action, and which should not at the same time be a means of protection for action, might as well not exist: it would be inoperative. A man who should be inaccessible to considerations of practical life in his method of thinking would be regarded not only as a useless person, but as a dangerous and even noxious person.

Such is the attitude of the *élite* in America. By "*élite*" I mean those who make the nation what it is, the kings of industry, the great creators of business. (The word "*élite*" in history does not have one and the same absolute meaning everywhere; a Greek of the *élite* resembles a Roman of the *élite* or an American of the *élite* as a book resembles a sword or a piece of gold.) To realize this one need only know something of the life story of these great cre-

ators of American civilization — who are not the Washingtons, the Lincolns, the Roosevelts, but the Vanderbilts, the Goulds, the Carnegies, the Rockefellers, the Pierpont Morgans, and sometimes even such men as Tweed and Croker. The latest of these colossi, Harriman, "the Napoleon of railroads," has been very well hit off by a writer well known in America, Lefèvre. (*American Magazine*, June, 1907.) "This man," he says, "is efficiency mad; he wants results, and he obtains results. An unproductive piece of work he considers immoral." This is the *credo* of all of these men of the élite, enterprising, energetic, magnificent, who represent throughout the whole world the American "type."

The intellectual class is just like them. In the July-September number, 1907, of the *American Journal of Sociology*, the editor thereof (Professor A. W. Small) publishes an earnest article in which he expresses fear that American thinkers go astray into unproductive researches. He speaks first of all especially of the social sciences and shows that their worth depends on the reply they make to this question: "What is there potentially within the self-conscious human being and how can he embody it in a practical value?" And next he says:

"I can see nothing but hysterics in any human activity whatsoever which is not in some way contributing its quota toward answering this question. Sciences all seem to me so many triflings with capricious conceits about life, unless each in its own way is co-

operating with all other investigations of human experience in working out the completest report possible upon the main question " (p. 400).

All the sciences should be only replies to the question "What should we know?" but only in the interest of the question "What should we do?" (p. 222). Contempt for the contemplative or æsthetic life is general. It is superfluous, however, to insist on these facts, which are pretty widely known. Nevertheless, let me repeat here, as an illustration, an incident in the life of the well-known President Harper of the University of Chicago. Upon his death-bed this man, whose life was so fraught with labor, uttered in a prayer these characteristic words: "And Lord, may there be for me a life after this life; and in that life *may there be work to do, tasks to accomplish!*" Contrast this ideal with the monastic retreats of old, with the apocalyptic paradises of past ages! And do not forget the effect of success upon men's minds. The rôle these great men of action play in their land, in fact, on the stage of the world, intoxicates them. And the envy that other nations feel seems to still more authenticate and ratify their opinions in their own eyes and urges them continually on in this method of looking at life.

Approach such people as these, now, and say to them that there are men in another hemisphere who do not reason from the practical value of a theory to its truth, who do not judge a philosophy by its

fruits, men who do not dream of identifying *truth* with *utility*. They will not understand you.

And the pragmatist philosophers are simply men who formulate this cast of mind in the technical language of philosophy.

Looking again into William James's book, we see there is scarcely a page in which he does not soundly rate the traditional philosophy of "refinement" which will never satisfy minds of the empirical temper. (*Pragmatism*, pp. 22, 23.) The traditional philosophy is considered dead: "Truth independent, truth that we *find* merely; truth no longer malleable to human need; truth incorrigible, in a word; such truth exists superabundantly — or is supposed to exist by rationalistically minded thinkers; but that means only the dead heart of the living tree, and its being there means only that truth also has its palæontology, and its 'prescription,' and may grow stiff with years of veteran service and petrified in men's regard by sheer antiquity." (*Pragmatism*, pp. 64, 65.)

"If an 'incorrigible' truth exists *per se*, it ought not to exist for us, at any rate it cannot exist, it does not exist." Mark this: "Never were as many men of a decidedly empiricist proclivity in existence as there are at the present day" (p. 14). And this: "We philosophers have to reckon with these feelings on your part. In the last resort it will be by them that all our philosophies shall ultimately be judged" (p. 38). This much is clear: If the traditional con-

ception of philosophy does not bring us satisfaction, then we must change that conception. "When we say this theory solves a problem on the whole more satisfactorily than that theory," that means [and that must mean] more satisfactorily to ourselves, and individuals will emphasize their points of satisfaction differently. Pragmatism agrees with nominalism, with utilitarianism, with positivism, so far as these philosophies are "anti-intellectualist"; that is, don't generalize, don't declare true what is not expedient and don't occupy themselves with the idea for the idea's sake (pp. 53, 54). "Theories become instruments, not answers to enigmas" (p. 53). Philosophy takes account of nothing but the pragmatic question, "In what respects would the world be different if this alternative or that were true?" (pp. 48, 200).

We see now why theories like the materialistic theory and like Spencerianism are *a priori* abominable systems; they are so, not on account of their principles, but on account of their consequences, — the one, more general, declaring mind incapable of reacting against the determinism of the world of phenomena; the other, more specialized, announcing the final dissolution of things; both suggesting the uselessness of effort, both discouraging, *therefore* both false. "This utter final wreck and tragedy is of the essence of scientific materialism as at present understood" (p. 105). And if some one should object that a healthy mind does not occupy itself

with consequences when the question is solely that of a search for truth, "Well," replies Professor James, "I can only say that if you say this you do injustice to human nature" (p. 108). "The absolute things, the last things, the overlapping things, are the true philosophic concerns; all superior minds feel seriously about them and the mind with the shortest views is simply the mind of the more shallow man" (p. 108). Professor James is admirable when it comes to consistency, and he would unhesitatingly sacrifice to pragmatism—which he deems to be of vital importance for the well-being of humanity—the aspiration of the philosophers of all time, namely, the finding of the causal scientific relations between phenomena, the conceiving (they are his own words) the "Multiverse" of the masses as a "Universe." There is no reason (he thinks) why man should continue this search; every time one has tried it; the end has been the strangling of all spontaneity in a logical system of causes and effects; now this is intolerable from the practical and human point of view, and since it is easy to see that the same thing will keep happening again and again, let us make a stand once for all for *pluralism*. "We can easily conceive that every fact in the world is separate and singular; that is, dissimilar to every other, and sole of its kind." When we see a relation we affirm a "concatenation"; when we fail to see one, never mind, "it saves us from all feverish excitement" over a principle of sublimity and "carries us forward into the stream of experience with a cool head" (p. 148).

"The true, to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking" (p. 222). The true changes with reference to us, and to keep on conceiving it from this relative standpoint is our philosophic duty. "Truth this side of the Pyrenees, error on the other side," wrote Pascal, ironically. Truth yesterday, error to-day, says William James, seriously.

"Ptolemaic astronomy, Euclidean space, Aristotelian logic, scholastic metaphysics, were expedient for centuries; but human experience has boiled over those limits, and we now call these things only relatively true, or true within those borders of experience. 'Absolutely' they are false; for we know that those limits were casual and might have been transcended by past theorists just as they are by present thinkers" (p. 223).

True, William James is right: "The general triumph method would mean an enormous change in the 'temperament' of philosophy" (p. 51).

And once more we ask: What reason for all this turning of things upside down? The reason is because logical *pluralism* and expediency allow pragmatism and ethical *meliorism*.

"For rationalism reality is ready-made and complete from all eternity, while for pragmatism it is still in the making, it awaits part of its complexion from the future." (*Pragmatism*, p. 257.)

Only those abandon themselves to rationalism and absolutism who, either because of inability or wil-



fulness, have no want for a philosophy of action. For others the belief in meliorism is indispensable, the belief in "risk" is healthful, and Professor James works his way up finally to the following utterances, so fraught with Yankee energy:

"Take the hypothesis seriously and as a live one. Suppose that the world's author put the case to you before creation, saying: 'I am going to make a world not certain to be saved,—a world the perfection of which shall be conditional merely, the condition being that each several agent does its own "level best." I offer you the chance of taking part in such a world. Its safety, you see, is unwarranted. It is a real adventure, with real danger. Yet it may win through. It is a social scheme of co-operative work genuinely to be done. Will you join the procession? Will you trust yourself and trust the other agents enough to face the risk?'

"Should you in all seriousness, if participation in such a world were proposed to you, feel bound to reject it as not safe enough? Would you say that rather than be part and parcel of so fundamentally pluralistic and irrational a universe, you preferred to relapse into the slumber of nonentity from which you had been momentarily aroused by the tempter's voice?'

"Of course, if you are normally constituted, you would do nothing of the sort. There is a healthy-minded buoyancy in most of us which such a universe would exactly fit. We would therefore accept the offer — 'Top! und schlag auf schlag!'"

Verily this people and this philosophy are made the one for the other.

Professor James has thrown himself more and more into the work of propagating his ideas among the general public. He has written several vigorous articles for American magazines, in which it is easy to see that to him pragmatism is at bottom only a kind of philosophical justification he would like to offer for the happy dispositions of his contemporaries, and especially of his compatriots. One of these articles bears the expressive sub-title, "The Keys which unlock Hidden Energies." (*American Magazine*, November, 1907.) In another one — "The Social Value of the College-bred" (*McClure's Magazine*, February, 1908) — we read that our universities ought to teach biographical history; that is to say, teach the virtues that have succeeded in the world and been admired, train college students to become *men* and not mere pedants of science and literature; and the author adds:

"Democracy is on its trial and no one knows how it will stand the ordeal. Abounding about us are pessimistic prophets. . . ." Now who knows? They may be right: "Who can be absolutely certain that this [failure] may not be the career of democracy? Nothing future is quite secure; states enough have inwardly rotted; and democracy as a whole may undergo self-poisoning. But, on the other hand, democracy is a kind of religion and we are bound not to admit its failure. Faiths and utopias are the noblest exercise of human reason, and no one with a spark of reason in him will sit down fatalistically before the croaker's picture" (pp. 420, 421).

Still if pragmatism is the American philosophy, natural, necessary, and unique, it is not exclusively American. It is also English, for example. English, but note the shade of difference. Mr. Schiller is not dealing, as is Professor James, with a public pragmatic already in temperament, with a public of converts. Or, at any rate, the English public he addresses is such to a much less degree. Mr. Schiller, it is true, has passed through an American university; but he is influenced in writing by the Oxford University atmosphere, and Oxford is much more in contact and in sympathy with the calm and settled civilization of the old world than is an American university. Professor James had only to authenticate, note down and approve; while Mr. Schiller, with exactly the same ideas, finds himself in his *milieu* set down as a dreamer, and has need of all the fiery enthusiasm of an apostle to make himself understood. With Professor James you never feel that you are listening to a paradox; he always has the appearance of saying to his public (and he is right): "In your hearts you think as I do," and he only endeavors to calmly remove misunderstandings and to prove that difficulties are only *apparently* such; while Mr. Schiller has to shake and arouse his audiences; he stoutly and loudly asseverates the antagonism that exists between intellectualism and pragmatism. We need only recall his comparison between two theories (*Humanism*, pp. 9-12): "There is no future life"; "there is a future life."

The first is the more acceptable from the rationalist point of view; but the second, which appeals to our needs and desires and calls for the will to believe, is the true one. Mr. Schiller does not say "still," "nevertheless," "in spite of appearances"; he says that it is *precisely because* the second is the "volitional" theory (that is, one in which "our thought is impelled and guided by the promptings of desire") that it is the true one.

Again Professor James expatiates complacently upon the idea of "risk" requisite to give the true joy of living; he speaks with the fine assurance that becomes the scion of a race that "is mewing its mighty youth," of the paralytic and the old, as if those words did not correspond to anything real in his thought. But Mr. Schiller looks at the matter from another angle; he is a pessimist, and the first merit of pragmatism, in his eyes, would be its *delivering* us from "what constitutes perhaps the worst and most paralyzing horror of the naturalistic view of life, — the nightmare of an *indifferent* universe." Note: Its *delivering* us; this means that the evil is *already there*; it is not a question of losing faith in life; it is lost; but it is a question of finding it again, and the second merit of pragmatism is that "it will prove a great tonic to revigorate a grievously depressed humanity." (*Humanism*, p. 13.)

When they are treating of the fundamental difficulties of pragmatism the language of the two men is again characteristic. Professor James placidly recog-

nizes the fact that pragmatism admits "common sense" as its foundation; it is philosophy that has passed through the sieve of experience ever since the time of exceedingly remote ancestors. (*Pragmatism*, p. 170.) Mr. Schiller cannot permit himself to go so far as that in the country of Bacons, Humes, Stuart Mills, and Huxleys, who, indeed, claim to be above "common sense." So he says, more modestly: No, I do not wish to receive common sense as "sacrosanct," but let us only *try* "to start from these conceptions, and see whether we shall not get as far with them as with any other of the philosophies of history; at any rate, see if we shall not get as far with them *as we may want to get*." (*Humanism*, p. 19.) It is easy to see the nuance of difference here.

Shall I add a word about Giovanni Papini, the Italian pragmatist? Mr. Papini thinks it a frightful error, the indifference of thinkers of the Latin race respecting the practical consequences of the determinist-creed of the scientists. If Mr. Schiller vociferates his pragmatism, Mr. Papini howls his out in violent, eccentric, and incoherent paradoxes; and while Messrs. Dewey, James, and even Schiller wish very much to preserve for pragmatism the decent appearance of a philosophy, to Mr. Papini philosophy is the enemy, and pragmatism "is less a philosophy than a method of doing without philosophy." (*Popular Science Monthly*, October, 1907, p. 354.) In the case of others, the vain efforts of

men to solve the great problems of life seem a good argument to use to get converts to pragmatism (compare, for example, Mr. Schiller's *Humanism*, p. xix). With Papini these are unnecessary concessions; to him it would apparently be mere play to solve the problem of the universe. Plato and Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Albert the Great, Descartes, and Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel are only great simpletons; the truth is (he says) these problems are of no importance for us. "The pragmatists are all anti-agnostics, and maintain that it is not true that these problems are too *lofty* for our intelligence, but too *devoid of sense*, too stupid, and that our unwillingness to busy ourselves with such matters is not a proof of the impotence, but of the power of our mind." (*Popular Science Monthly*, pp. 355, 356.) This recalls the American Christian Science doctors, who maintain they can heal any kind of a malady if they only will to do so; the curious thing, though, is that very frequently — and almost always when they might have the opportunity of getting a glorious victory over their adversaries — they don't will to do it. Apparently they also desire to test their own power of mind!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One can read, however, in the *Mercure de France* (Nov. 1, 1907) a short story by Mr. Papini which does not seem in the same vein. He says in *The Devil Told Me* ("Le Démon m'a dit") that if Adam and Eve had eaten *all* the apples of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they would have become wise in everything. — But, after all, perhaps the devil, when he told Papini that, had in his pocket some of these apples of Eden which he offered to his interlocutor, and that the latter threw them disdainfully away. Too bad for philosophy; if the devil had only chosen another confidant!

It is futile to dwell on considerations that are only too evidently aside from the main concern. What have matters like economy of time or economy of thought (*loc. cit.* p. 356) got to do with truth? Nothing, absolutely nothing; still less, if possible, than the optimistic or pessimistic consequences of a theory, or progress, or meliorism, and the theory of "risk."

## II

But there is something more. At the same time that you exalt the power of action, of energy, the spirit of initiative, you must also think of the outcome of it all. Life, as it presents itself to the average man imbued with such ideas, is no more than a frantic race for success and a struggle in which the strongest triumphs. Working along such a line as that we shall only arrive at the *homo homini lupus* of Hobbes. I do not wish to be too hard on humanity. Let us concede that our civilization would never again be willing to ignore the Christian doctrine of justice for the weak. Nevertheless, life proves superabundantly that, in the world of solid reality at least, if we wish men to hold in check their selfish pursuit of happiness, we must have motives more powerful than that sentimentalism and that altruism which is instinctive in the human heart. It is a fact that we see everywhere men of

power favoring the social conditions which guarantee them the exercise of their power, whereas it is the downtrodden class who, when they protest, ask for more altruism in others. Hence there are needed, in order to react against human nature, certain moral restraints, which themselves amount to nothing unless they borrow their sanction and authority from a power exterior and superior to man, — in a word, religion. Laws punish crime according to the mere letter of their edicts, and even ethical motives are only human, and, consequently, insufficient. Let us imagine a man who is able to get the better of others while preserving an outward show of morality: there is really no reason why he should not do it if he wants to apply strictly his philosophy of “results” and of “success.” As Fouillée very well says, in his recent *Morale des idées-forces*, in the chapter on “Disinterestedness”: The appeal to ethics, to the general interest of society, as conceived by past theories (utilitarianism and socialism included) “is a fine thing, provided I have the will to subordinate myself thereto, and, if need be, sacrifice myself for it. But, again, by what *reasons* weighty enough to win my assent can the sacrifice of interest be secured in the name of the idea of interest?” That is the point. . . . Fouillée himself proposes “a *persuasive* ideal, higher than which the understanding can conceive nothing.” But here again some one may say: I am abstractedly persuaded of the grandeur of this



ideal, but I have strong special reasons that keep me from the desire I feel of yielding to it. Persuasive ethics is a utopia more noble than others, but yet deceptive. If it is left to man to persuade himself to such and such actions, neither his fellowmen, nor, I venture to say, he himself, will dare to take the risk of building solidly on that foundation. We can imagine occasions when, in order to be morally sublime, a man will think it necessary to lie, deceive, rob — what then? Personal morality (which is, after all, that of many of the intellectual class in our days) leaves morality entirely at the discretion of each individual. From the point of view of social order, given the egoistic nature of man, it is a fatal theory; and the man moving constantly in the world of practical realities does not find there the moral restraint which society needs. The voice of conscience without a God back of it is a dead letter. Why should I care about a voice that speaks in the name of nothing? or even one (as some will have it) that speaks in the name of humanity? As if I were not a part of that humanity! — and, very naturally, that part which most interests me, unless some superior power forces me to interest myself in others more than in myself, or as much, at any rate. Really, if you think of it once, the keen, intelligent, *good* man would be very foolish to allow himself to be stopped by this obstacle, by this phantom of conscience with which agnostic moralists

have for a long time been trying (and still often try) <sup>1</sup> to allure us.

And people reason thus, naturally and unconsciously. Hence the imperative necessity of religion as a support of morality, something absolutely imperative as a condition of order, in every people among whom practical life is the chief thing and the contemplative life a luxury. One might well put it absolutely and say everywhere; but it is especially imperative in America for this reason, that here the consequences of the lack of a religious check would be more dangerous because the conditions are more favorable than anywhere else for the development of moral individualism (which means, be it remembered, less favorable than elsewhere for the development of intellectual individualism). Every reflecting man is keenly conscious of this in America, — the magistrate and the judge as well as the business man, the writer, the philosopher. There is no country where the sentiment of the necessity of belief is so ardently fostered, where religion is so energetically maintained (I do not say rooted) through the united action of the wealthy class and the intellectual class. We have here few of those bold and independent radicals who dare to ignore the pragmatic needs of the nation and take their position on a foundation purely intellectual.<sup>2</sup> All those who

<sup>1</sup> Even our American ethical culture societies, alluded to by me elsewhere in this volume, have no other end in view.

Even in American universities, instructors must be infinitely circumspect; for the proportion of young people who are to devote

professionally or otherwise have a certain influence on the people or comprehend the social situation are tacitly agreed on this point. Even the sceptics (there are a few of these; for as James has well said, a man chooses his philosophical belief according to his personal needs) know the social value of religion and never attack it. Not to speak of religion is in America a question of etiquette, like taking off one's hat to a lady, or not using the fingers in eating one's food. All this, I hasten to say, is not a bad thing. I think it was the great pagan Stendhal who could never go to Rome without feeling himself become a Catholic? It is a somewhat analogous case. An avowed free thinker in Europe will conceal his flag in America, without hypocrisy, and simply out of respect for social order. Everything in that country is so different in that respect from European countries, — the smooth and determined face of the man of business, the matron with the bearing of a queen, the laborer with bold and open eye who seems always ready for a fight, the indifferent and provoking shop-girl, the precociously cunning bootblack or the "artful dodger" newsboy — everything in this country of aspiring "climbers," even to the sumptuous palaces, the inso-

themselves to the liberal professions (except law and medicine) is infinitely small; in fact they are the exception. Almost all are destined to engage in commerce or manufacturing; and a conscientious professor cannot forget that the ideas laid before them are not to remain ideas, but will pass into the moral and social life of the nation.

lent automobiles, and the mendacious advertisements, says: "If God did not exist it would be necessary to invent him!"

On the other hand it is in this very America that one hears repeated high and low and everywhere that dogmas are of no account and will in time disappear; in other words, that religion is dying out and that morality alone will remain. Beware of believing it. Or at any rate let us make a distinction. The philosophers have generally believed they would be lost if they explained the religious manifestations of men otherwise than by a unique principle (either fear, or the need of perfecting oneself, or the desire of happiness, or the necessity of a first cause, or simply something impalpable they call religious sentiment). But this single principle is not at all indispensable. Very different causes produce effects very similar in appearance or even in reality. One man may study jurisprudence and practice law in order to defend the weak, another for the purpose of despoiling them, a third for the simple pleasure of disentangling complex cases; and sometimes more than one of these causes may be operant at the same time. So it is with religion. Some are led to it by pure speculation; their understanding calls for a first cause of the world, and they call it God. Others are led to religion by their experience of the practical life, and either through interest seek in it the satisfaction of their desire for happiness, or through disinterestedness are anxious to see some

day the injustice of destiny atoned for in heaven. Others see in the fear of God a powerful agent of civilization, a moral restraint; and so on. Although we must certainly admit that these different elements very often exist simultaneously and thus on occasion mutually re-enforce each other, yet they often exist separately; and being different in their origin they remain different in their practical operation. It is always perfectly possible, in fact, legitimate, to analyze, and consider each one by itself. I would by no means ignore the purely psychological or intellectual elements in the formation of the religious sentiment (I defended their human and so probably indestructible character in an article — which in truth seems to me to-day less clear and precise than I could wish — in the *Revue chrétienne*, November, 1903, *Religion in Society in the United States*); but just now we are dealing with the utilitarian element of religion.

And it is in keeping in mind those various sources of the religious spirit, that we must examine the question of the disappearance of dogmas. From the pragmatic or utilitarian point of view, certain of these (the Trinity, the Immaculate Conception, Transsubstantiation) are not essential; and if we were only speaking of these perhaps we should not go wrong, as M. Bargy says in his conscientious work, *Religion in Society in the United States*, if we did not attach the same importance to them as formerly. Yet to infer from these few mystic

dogmas that *all* dogmas are of a secondary character in the eyes of American Christians, and are in process of disappearance, would be a gross error. The social utility of religion is not yet a thing of the past. In order that religion as a moral restraint shall respond to what is expected of it certain formal dogmas are indispensable, such as the judgment, immortality, paradise, and a place of expiation (the last, however, not absolutely requisite). You have only to lay a finger on those dogmas that affirm the fundamental dogma of God as lord of the world, in whose sight men are held responsible for their keeping of the ten commandments, and you will find that a clamorous protest, as if from one voice, will arise from every quarter of the great continent to excommunicate and anathematize you.

Some others have tried to show that dogmas were destined to disappear by resting their argument upon the development of a certain kind of modern theology and have affirmed — to use the words of Edouard Rod in his book on Rousseau — that, “from the *Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar* up to the *Sketch of a Philosophy of Religion* by the eminent dean of the Faculty of Theology in Paris (M. Sabatier), God has finally been evaporated like an incense-wafer that leaves behind it a little perfume and a great deal of smoke.” But America is not a country of speculation and theories. In fact, if the people had to choose between utilitarian dogmas, mingled with dogmas purely specula-

tive, and the rejection of all dogmas without exception, the first alternative would indisputably win the day for a long time yet. Only get men to comprehend — and it would not be a difficult thing to do — that, theology once laid on the shelf with metaphysical discussions, religion would then have to be satisfied with the God of the deists or the pantheists (that is to say, a God absolutely apart from the world, or an impersonal God), and such a religion would be repulsed with as much horror as the crassest materialism. For, to give up theism, the doctrine of a personal deity keeping watch over the acts of men would be, from the moral point of view, to abandon everything. Hence, in order not to be deprived of theism men will often retain more theology than is necessary for their practical purposes.

Do the facts confirm our theories? Absolutely. Consider for a moment sectarianism in America, which, far from showing a tendency to disappear, resists stubbornly the repeated and constant efforts of those who see in it a source of weakness for the church. And it is clear that it is a weakness. If then people can't make up their minds to yield on this point of dogma, it is because, after all, they cling to dogma. Let me be permitted to cite at this point a few passages from my article in the *Revue chrétienne* just referred to, written in answer to the book of M. Bargy:

“If it were as M. Bargy understands to be true, that doctrine were a ‘dead weight’ in the church, then

the sect most indifferent to dogma, the Unitarian, ought to make a good many recruits from year to year, and those in which the creed is important ought to lose them. But in reality just the opposite is true. Unitarianism remains stationary, while Episcopalianism, and especially Catholicism, are ever gaining. It may be that Unitarianism is *per se* superior; but at all events the phenomena that I have just recalled to the minds of my readers (and which are often with good reason recalled) show that the great majority of American Christians do not feel inclined in that direction; they refuse to take the last step; they feel that they ought not to do so”<sup>1</sup> (p 364).

Mention should be made also of the failure of the “Societies for Ethical Culture” in America. “They represent still better the ideal that M. Bargy attributes to Americans. And yet during the thirty

<sup>1</sup> This fact of the numerical insignificance of “Unitarian” congregations gave rise to an interesting discussion during the first months of the year 1908. Inasmuch as one clergyman had sought the cause of this in the lack of interest on the part of said congregations in temporal things, another took the opposite side. Examining the subject on its ground merits he developed the idea, in the *New York Sun*, that it is rather their indifference to dogma that injures Unitarians, — a thing that has often happened to other churches in America. He then expresses in theological terms what I have just stated in philosophical terms, saying among other things that “to insist upon works of human welfare as the motive for being of a religious body seems to us too superficial greatly to concern us. . . . It is to reverse the true order of cause and effect. . . . When the minds of men are penetrated with a belief in the reality of a divine order in the world, when unselfishness and mutual help are seen to be obligatory because men are children of the one Father and to be our contribution to that divine order which moves through the world, then do all works of humanitarianism proceed from a permanently operating cause.” (Quoted from *The Literary Digest*, April 4, 1908.)



years since they were founded, after a brief period of prosperity following upon the formation of each society, they have remained almost absolutely stationary" (p. 365). The founder of these societies which preach the suppression of religious dogma, Professor Felix Adler, is a Jew, a noble and broad-minded man, but who has followers of the same race who would not be sorry if they could neutralize religion entirely. The other fellow-theorists of Professor Adler are either semi-cultivated men who like to think themselves superior to the crowd, or else persons of excellent character, but without practical good sense, believing, in all simplicity of heart, in the natural goodness of man. There are, besides, a few professors who make a parade of agnosticism and who are dreamers after all, — positivists in their thinking, dreamers in practical life, precisely the opposite of the status of those around them. The American people are too wary to allow themselves to be caught by this utopia of morality stripped of all accompaniment and support and without other sanction than the conscience. Some have been pleased to say that it is not the fashion to belong to "ethical societies," and that in America etiquette rules. This is true. Yet the fashion undoubtedly has a reason-for-being, good or bad; a cause which I pointed out above, namely, that morality vanishes without dogmatic religion. We may further note the curious attitude that M. Bargy is obliged to take to explain the rôle that the Bible continues to play in

American churches and which seems to him so prodigious an anachronism. The biblical critic has received a good welcome, it is true (he says), and yet the holy volume retains all its influence. How to understand that? "People sacrificed a part to save the whole," we read, by way of explanation (on page 278). "It was like the retreat of an army in covering which all the members fall one by one. It arrives at last at an inaccessible place of refuge; the army has no more men, but it is safe. Little by little parts of the Bible were given up; one by one, without counting, they were abandoned to the scientists, but the sanctity of the whole was maintained." And this also on page 279: "Every one works out the inner meaning of the Bible for himself, and people now only worship in common the letter thereof. It is no longer anything more than a symbol. Yet the worship of one and the same symbol is a bond of union. In an army the flag excites as many different ideas as there are minds. There is no orthodox comment on the flag; it is only an emblem, and that is its strong point, is what makes it such a source of power." In common on all this I wrote in the *Revue* just referred to: "It is almost a piece of legerdemain. What! where (I ask again) is that practical American spirit? When the parts are valueless, the whole, you maintain, is yet worth something? When the soldiers are dead, the army still exists? You take as a symbol a document the worthlessness of which you permit to be asserted

and maintained? No; there is something in this just as in the case of the existence of sectarianism . . . and of Unitarianism, and of the Societies of ethical culture . . . something that the conception of the facts by M. Bargy does not explain" (p. 366).

Events have recently taken place in America as if on purpose to show how the foregoing observations by the writer are founded on reality. As early as the close of the year 1906 premonitory indications of a great panic were discerned. Now immediately before the depression in values, in February, 1907, there appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, of New York, a financial paper, certain editorial remarks in which the editor-in-chief, Sereno S. Pratt, discussed with keen accuracy the influence of religion on business. A decline in religious faith, affirms Mr. Pratt, "affects the basic conditions of civilization," and among other things "becomes a factor in the financial market"; "changes the standards and affects the values of things that are bought and sold," and "concerns the immediate interests of those who never had such a faith almost as much as it does the lives of those who have had their faith and lost it." It would be well worth while for a commission of experts, named by the government, to study at close range what is the precise influence of a decline in faith in the United States upon such phenomena in the financial world and such social unrest as we have witnessed during the past few months. It is a fact that every one will admit, whatever his own

personal ideas on religion, that "there is no one who would not prefer to do business with a person who really believes in a future life." Consequently, if the world holds fewer men of such faith, that is going to make a great difference in the way business is conducted. It is impossible to judge consciences, continues Mr. Pratt; we must confine ourselves to external indications. Now, the churches are not as full as formerly on a Sunday; family worship becomes rarer; the weekly day of rest is less observed, and people give themselves up more to worldly enjoyments and labor, young people have less and less serious knowledge of the Bible; finally, the churches have made a failure of their efforts to win the confidence of the laboring people. If these are true indications of a decline of faith in the United States, "then, indeed, there is no more important problem before us (it should not be forgotten that Pratt was addressing the world of finance) than that of either discovering some adequate substitute for faith, or taking immediate steps to check a development that has within it the seeds of a national disaster." Two measures might be proposed to replace the factor of faith in the business world, — the socialism of Karl Marx, or the concentration of finances (that is to say, the *trust* pushed to its last limits by a man capable of directing all). Discussing these two alternatives, Mr. Pratt reaches the conclusion that neither the one nor the other is the remedy adequate to the

ill. His own idea is couched in the following language:

"The supreme need of the hour is not elastic currency or sounder banking, or better protection against panics, or bigger names, or more equitable tariffs, but a revival of faith, a return to a morality which recognizes a base in religion and the establishment of a workable and working theory of life that view man as something more than a mere lump of matter."

There indeed you have expressed with admirable clearness and freedom the opinion of the solid class upon which rests the powerful American civilization. In ordinary times people may drop hints and mask their thought with rhetoric. In the hour of danger every misunderstanding is a crime, and at the risk of shocking certain over-delicate ears it is necessary to speak freely.

Of this same time, when the storm was felt to be approaching, let me cite another characteristic occurrence, — probably one out of a thousand that chance brought to my knowledge. There is in Wall Street, New York, a stockbroker's office, at the head of which is a lady named Mrs. Gailord. She prefaces her daily work every morning by a prayer in the rooms of her office. At the beginning of the year 1907 she determined to do more: she arranged with a clergyman to come every Wednesday to preside over a religious service at her place of business. She asked the great financiers, her neighbors, with whose religious prepossessions she was acquainted (the

Rockefellers, the Pierpont Morgans, the Schiffs) to co-operate in the work. Her assistants and guests could thus pass directly from the house of God to the temple of Mammon, and that was regarded as quite natural.<sup>1</sup>

It was at this time, also, that the proposal was again put forth to create a new interest in the Bible by putting the sacred volume on the program of *literary courses*. It might seem as if the putting of the Bible on the same footing as Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton would be to lower it to the level of a purely human work, deprive it of prestige instead of giving it prestige. But that depends upon the atmosphere or environment, it seems; and certainly Professor Phelps, and those who had previously broached the same idea, had no other object than to cause the Bible to be more widely read, in order to instil its moral teachings into the minds of the scholars at the schools and universities.

People recovered, however, from this first emotion,—the great crisis was not to come before November,—but it was felt that the social and

<sup>1</sup> The author did not hear farther from this work. But whether it succeeded or not is of little consequence after all. The interesting thing is that some one proposed it. Let me add, in order to be at the same time exact and conscientious, that Mrs. Gailord seemed to have also in view another object, which she thus expressed: "There are a good many women who, as a result of foolish speculation or the loss of money, find themselves in a state of mind in which a minister would be of the greatest help. I would therefore add to the times of regular services moments when the clergyman would afford spiritual consultations. But the counsel it is proposed to offer at those special times is to be personal, not business, counsel."

financial equilibrium was in an unstable condition; and the ecclesiastical authorities were as much occupied with the menacing danger as were bank directors and politicians. At the time of church festivals, especially during Lent, there are churches or halls in which, outside of office hours, religious services for business men are held. I remember having seen on a church door in the neighborhood of Wall Street during Easter week this notice: "Quick Service for Business Men" — a pendant of "Quick Luncheon for Business Men." In 1906 they had the idea of establishing in New York regular open-air noon meetings, during the pleasant season, for the same public. There were fifteen hundred public services held, the number of persons present being estimated at four hundred sixty-two thousand. The meetings were conducted at ten different places simultaneously, the most important being those in the "down-town" region. In 1907 the work was resumed with more ardor, on account of the precarious state of business and to serve as a counteraction to the attempts at illegitimate speculation. Thirty thousand dollars were subscribed by the different religious congregations, well-known ministers were secured, sometimes from a distance, who, at the mid-day luncheon hour, in the heart of summer and under the torrid sun of New York City, preached with bared head to a mixed audience of laborers and clerks, bankers and politicians. Enthusiastic persons wrote, "The days of Whitfield

and Wesley are here again." The speakers stood on the steps of City Hall, or a few blocks farther down in Wall Street itself. Sometimes they spoke mounted on an office stool, or standing up in an automobile. They would take for their text such words as "the wages of sin is death." The success of these meetings was disputed. But at any rate they took place, and their organizers found in them a means of inculcating the sense of responsibility in the minds of those who, by risky transactions, were in the way of disturbing the financial equilibrium. This is the important thing for us to know.

In the autumn came the panic, and phenomena of this kind multiplied. It was noticeable, for example, that one of the great manufacturers of the United States put himself at the head of a movement, nor for converting — that was not necessary — but for rendering more intense the religious life of Fifth Avenue, the street, as every one knows, that is lined with the "brown-stone fronts" and costly palaces of the kings of American finance. Mr. Converse, president of the great Baldwin Locomotive Works of Philadelphia, is himself a Presbyterian, and his initiative in this matter was hailed as "something that had long been wanted." Church members don't go to church as they ought to in order to set an example of Christian living — this was the chief point insisted on. "When an establishment like that" (said Mr. Converse, speaking of the sumptuous Presbyterian Church of Fifth



Avenue), "representing millions of dollars, is used only two or three times a week would it not be a just criticism that the Master makes in saying that this church is not doing what it can for His glory!" Nobody was complaining of immoral lives, in the sense in which this phrase is usually understood, nor of lack of charity, — American millionaires amply acquit themselves of their obligations toward the communities in which they make their money, — but of dishonest speculations, dirty commercial tricks, abuses of confidences. Here is where a religious restraint or check is necessary. "I consider this fact (said Mr. Converse again), that the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church of New York is undertaking a series of evangelist meetings, to be the most important kind of a movement for the sending out of a kind of appeal to the churches, an appeal which is to-day especially necessary." "A kind of appeal"; it is not necessary for him to specify what kind. "To-day"; that is, at this time of financial paralysis and industrial crisis.<sup>1</sup>

Read the American journals of that time. Everywhere the same refrain: "Our churches are deserted, we must fill them"; "church members are becoming formalists, their zeal must be rekindled"; "our sincere Christians are losing themselves in theological discussions in place of living the Christian life"; "religion is the salvation of society,"

<sup>1</sup> It is the same Mr. Converse who went to the theological seminary of Princeton to urge the students to cultivate pulpit eloquence.

etc., etc. At the very moment in which I am writing these lines, in Philadelphia, a city of over a million and a half of inhabitants, a formidable campaign of revivalist meetings is under way. Every day for six weeks, in twenty-one churches, people have been ceaselessly at work transacting "the King's Business." Three hundred congregations hold union meetings, and seventy-five evangelists and preachers are assisted by five thousand "personal workers"; that is to say, persons who take upon them to go and talk privately with those who rise at the close of the service to declare their willingness to march under the banner of Christ. There are two thousand choir members assigned every evening to the different churches. Certain evangelists even enter the restaurants (with a portable church organ), for the purposes of getting signatures and saving souls. A special committee makes it its work to send messengers from door to door to ask people to join in the great movement. These "bell-pullers" must visit somewhere near twenty-five thousand houses in the great "city of homes." And when Philadelphia is conquered they will conquer other cities. Please note that in all this there is no trace of fanaticism or mysticism. It is simply due to the financial panic. The moment seems favorable. These evangelists of Philadelphia are putting into practice, after the crisis has passed, the counsels which the editor of the *Wall Street Journal* gave some time ago, and of which I have given some account.

The country recovered rapidly from the panic, and so to some extent these efforts went to nothing. But let there come a permanent crisis, as predicted by some, and it is easy to see that if it does not end in a social revolution, it will be the signal for a profound religious revival.

I have selected for a somewhat detailed demonstration the most striking manifestation of the pragmatic spirit. But it is evident that it is the same in other things, and that in the field of private morality as well as in the domain of business, religion acting as a moral restraint — and always apart from the satisfaction of the feelings connected with it — is of the highest importance.

Voltaire, with his superb common sense, long ago saw this, and admirably expressed it. Although he was the great apostle of tolerance, he also showed that an atheist “who was a violent and powerful reasoner would be as deadly a scourge as a sanguinary bigot” (*Treatise on Tolerance*). At the beginning of the nineteenth century Balzac took up the same theme again and laid urgent stress on it. For instance, he says: “Christianity, and especially Catholic Christianity, forming, as I have said, in *Le Médecin de Campagne*, a complete system for the repression of the evil tendencies of men, is the most important element of social order.” (Preface to the *Comédie Humaine*, p. 7.) And fifty years later, Taine for his part penned his famous demon-

stration that every time that the influence of religion decreases, as in the time of the Renaissance and during the eighteenth century, man becomes especially debauched and cruel. "We can now estimate the value of the contribution of Christianity to our modern societies, what it gives us in the way of chastity, gentleness, and humanitarianism; what it secures among us in the way of honesty, good faith, and justice. Neither philosophic reason, nor artistic and literary culture, nor even the institution of feudal, military, and chivalric honor, no administration, no government, can take its place or do its work. Whether vested in Greek, Catholic, or Protestant wrapping, Christianity still furnishes for four hundred millions of human beings the broad vans by which alone man can lift himself above himself, above his grovelling life, and beyond the limits of his narrow horizon, through patience, resignation, and hope, on and up into serenest skies; lift himself higher even than temperance, purity, and goodness, into the realm of consecration and sacrifice. It alone can hold us back in our fatal downward course, apply the brakes to check the insensible backsliding by which, incessantly and with all its natural weight of imperfection, our race retrogrades toward its baser and lowest instincts. The old gospel is still to-day the best aid to the social instinct."

At the beginning of the twentieth century, now that democracy has had still more time to be tested,

we must still echo this sentiment. To-day more than ever, infinitely more, are there reasons for feeling uneasy as to the effect of free thought on the masses, and as to the effect of an education necessarily superficial, that is to say, one that does not sink deep enough to really do good, but yet goes far enough to work disaster. And if we do more than merely register facts and instances without comment, we find that, nine times out of ten, it is the decline in the religious faith that is stated (and rightly stated) to be the cause of the decline in morality; I have in mind such things as the increase of divorces, the lessening birth-rate, and drunkenness. I could cite hundreds of examples of this. Here is one that happens to be before my eyes now. A certain Mr. Tasker, after having drawn a lamentable picture (in *Zion's Herald*, of Boston, January, 1908) of the State of New Hampshire, lays the blame, at its close, on:

“the encroaching spirit of irreligion. The non-church-going element increases. In the thirty-seven localities of which we have spoken the religious census gives the following results: out of a population of about thirty-two thousand souls, eight thousand, say a quarter, affirm that they have no affiliation with the church, and eighteen thousand, more than half, have never been baptized. . . . The church ought to be the centre of moral and spiritual life; but it is a fact that, in many of our communities, the church is a decreasing influence in the lives of the people. Congregations are

small; interest in the church is but slender, and those who are outside look on it with contempt."

And here is an extract from a New York periodical, *The Examiner*, apropos of the increase in the number of suicides which took on the proportion of an epidemic, owing to the financial panic:

"It may be due to various causes: living at a low moral level, greed of gain, and general indifference to religious things. Men as a rule no longer pay any attention to God or their fellowmen. The law of God no longer has any terrors for them. It is no longer 'a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' The desires of the world must be gratified, must be indulgently yielded to and the superior gifts of God ignored. . . . Many scoff at the rights of their brother men, treat them unjustly, crush them under foot. In the same way they scoff at God. . . . They fear nothing and have become indifferent to the hereafter. They live like the beasts and die as if believing death to be the end of all."

It is interesting to see those who profess only the morality of laymen turning like the preachers against unmoral literature and against a stage with advanced ideas. While forbearing to appeal in this matter to religion as a restraining force, they go so far as to appeal — not to the law; they have n't the courage to go so far as that, but — to public opinion to react against license of thought. I heard Professor Felix Adler, the founder of ethical societies, make such a recommendation in a formal lecture

in Philadelphia. But here is the cul-de-sac in which one is caught in an unwise desire to "emancipate" the minds of the masses! One takes away their religion as being a superstition, but runs up against their incapacity to do without it. One directs a flood of light upon religion to cause it to vanish, but one does not dare throw light on social problems as they present themselves to mediocre-minded people, once religious sanction has been removed. If it were necessary to choose, the system of the church would seem to be infinitely wiser. I have treated this aspect of the subject — independently, however, of any discussion of pragmatism — in *The International Journal of Ethics*, July, 1906, under the head of *Literature and the Moral Code*, and shall recur to it farther on.<sup>1</sup>

This long introduction was necessary in order to make those who have not lived in America comprehend how pragmatism reflects this second phase of modern thought, as it had reflected the popular conception of life considered from the point of view of action, of struggle for success.

Undoubtedly we have to interpret pragmatism and read between the lines, and we may do so by recalling these words of Kant apropos of Plato:

"I observe that it is not at all extraordinary, both in oral discussion and in writing, that, by comparison of

<sup>1</sup> The article from the *International Journal of Ethics* is also reproduced in Appendix B.

the thoughts an author expresses, one can understand him better than he understands himself; for he has not sufficiently defined his idea, and for that reason he sometimes speaks, and even sometimes thinks, the very opposite of what he means; *i. e.*, contrary to the end he has in view." (*Pure Reason*, ed. 1791, p. 370.)

I further remark that the pragmatist *philosophers*, when they approach questions of first principles, always maintain a certain reserve, which does not lack dignity, while handling their subject, at the same time making a strong effort not to lose contact with solid reality. But it is our right and our duty to hale out into the broad daylight the premises of their assertions. In fine it will not be superfluous to recall that the principal among them, and, to tell the truth, the man who fears least the contact with concrete reality has a fine confidence in the nobleness of human nature. The religion he claims for his personal pragmatism, and from which he asks sanction for his ideas, is an optimistic religion (he, himself, in one of his essays, calls pessimism "a religious disease"), and he who holds to this optimism insists constantly upon the recompense of the good and the courageous, while he relegates to the background and even affects to ignore, a punishment for the base and undeserving. But the one implies the other. As we have seen elsewhere, it is in vain for Professor James to thunder against a punitive God. If God really watches over the moral order of the world, he must also punish or at least correct, the



unjust; or, if not correct them, at least allow them to bear the consequences of their acts. "God's in his heaven; all's right with the world! *That's* the real heart of your theology, and for that you need no rationalist definitions." (*Pragmatism*, p. 122.)

There are other matters, however, on which it is preferable not to speak too loud for other motives than that dignified reserve of which I spoke just now. Professor James knows very well that few true philosophers would overtly consent to estimate the truth of an idea by its moral consequences. Now it is always useless to plant a blow between the eyes of very strong convictions (or call them prejudices if you will); and consequently it would not be very clever for him to insist too ostensibly upon this matter of sanction on the part of religion. Yet the idea, though often veiled, is there, and forms the rock-foundation of William James's writings. We must conciliate (he says incessantly) and satisfy both the empirical proclivities of man and his religious proclivities. Which means: we must satisfy his need of action and his need of knowing that his actions (and especially those of others) are watched over by a superior power. "Never," he says, "were as many men of a decidedly empirical proclivity in existence as there are at the present day. Our children, one may say, are almost born scientific. But our esteem for facts has not neutralized in us all religiousness. It is itself almost religious. Our scientific temper is devout. . . . A man wants

facts; he wants science; but he also wants a religion." (*Pragmatism*, pp. 14, 15.) And pragmatism recommends itself for the very reason that it "may be a happy harmonizer of empirical ways of thinking with the more religious demands of human beings." (*Pragmatism*, p. 69.)

Judging by the terms employed, one could easily believe the matters in hand here are sublime science, and religious needs purely relating to the feelings and sentiments. But no; these "empirical proclivities" are, above all, proclivities for the practical life wholly independent of disinterested philosophy. And if Professor James really intends to include in his "religious needs" sentimental religion as well as utilitarian religion, yet in reality, pragmatically, it is the latter that is important above all else. It is this which is frankly aimed at in the ulterior developments of the author's thought — although always in such a way as not to offend our ears by a utilitarianism too rude. Professor James himself — though perhaps without ever having come to a formal understanding with himself on this point — makes a perfect distinction between religion in general and "the religious needs" in the sense of the need of an ethical sanction. It is this latter conception which is alone on the tapis in the important discussion of his third lecture. He is there comparing materialism and spiritualism: "And first of all I call your attention to a curious fact. It makes not a single jot of difference so far as the *past* of the

world goes, whether we deem it to have been the work of matter or whether we think a divine spirit was its author " (p. 96). We may suppose that the two hypotheses, materialist and spiritualist, both one and the other give an equally satisfactory account of what is, and hence intellectually, " the two theories, in spite of their different sounding names, mean exactly the same thing, and the dispute is purely verbal " (p. 97). Is it a God or atoms? " The God, if there, has been doing just what atoms could do . . . and earning such gratitude as is due to atoms and no more " (p. 99). But let us state the pragmatic question, "What difference would it make *now* whether the world be the product of matter or of spirit?" then " the alternative of materialism or theism is intensely practical " (p. 101). Here is the whole thing in a nutshell: " Materialism means simply the denial that the moral order is eternal, and the cutting off of ultimate hopes; spiritualism means the affirmation of an eternal moral order and the letting loose of hope. Surely here is an issue genuine enough, for any one who feels it; and, as long as men are men, it will yield matter for a serious philosophic debate " (p. 107). " This need of an eternal moral order is one of the deepest needs of our breast. And those poets, like Dante and Wordsworth, who live on the conviction of such an order, owe to that fact the extraordinary tonic and consoling power of their verse," etc., etc. But this is deviation from philosophic debate into the field of eloquence.

On the same principle James ignores every philosophic doctrine, which, without being materialistic, does not recognize a personal God, — deism, pantheism, which "disdain empiricism's needs" (p. 72). And even the God of certain contemporary theistic writers "lives on as purely abstract heights as does the Absolute (of the pantheists)" (p. 19). The barbarous God of former times, conceived under the form of a powerful monarch, was not very inspiring, although it at least "kept some touch with concrete realities" (p. 70). And a little farther on: "If theological ideas prove to have a value for concrete life they will be true, for pragmatism, in the sense of being good for so much" (p. 73), and pragmatism "will take a God who lives in the very dirt of private fact — if that should seem a likely place to find him" (p. 80). God (he had already said in *The Will to Believe*) "must be conceived under the form of a mental personality" (p. 122).<sup>1</sup>

Now I ask whether this is not the very echo of the convictions expressed by Sereno Pratt, by Mrs. Gailord, by Mr. Converse, and by the preachers of Wall Street?

As soon as he feels germinating within him the idea of a philosophy of pragmatism, William James

<sup>1</sup> I am pleased to note that the pragmatists themselves have laid stress upon the solicitude for religious utilitarianism in Professor James's writings. Professor Dewey, in the article cited from the *Journal of Philosophy*, Feb. 13, 1908, while pointing out that, with the author of *Pragmatism*, the moral worth of an idea frequently suffices to establish its truth adds, "This is especially the case when it is a question of theological ideas" (p. 93).

betrays his conviction that the value of religion in the world is to be gauged by its utilitarian side. Belief is measured by action, he says in his essay *The Will to Believe*, and therefore, "Since belief is measured by action, he who forbids us to believe religion to be true, necessarily also forbids us to act as we should if we did believe it to be true. *The whole defense of religious faith hinges upon action.* If the action required or inspired by the religious hypothesis is in no way different from that dictated by the naturalistic hypothesis, then religious faith is a pure superfluity, better pruned away, and controversy about its legitimacy is a piece of idle trifling, unworthy of serious minds" (pp. 29, 30). He adds that, in default of empirical proof, he is willing to believe the religious hypothesis simply through contrasting it with the naturalistic hypothesis; and this preference he justifies by words like these: "Refuse to believe, and you shall indeed be right, for you shall irretrievably perish. But believe, and again you shall be right, for you shall save yourself" (p. 59). The only difference is that it is all to your advantage to believe. Elsewhere in the same volume, in reply to the dictum that "reflex action and all that follows from it give the coup de grace to the superstition of God," he declares, "that a God, whether *existent or not*, is at all events the kind of being which, *if he did exist*, would form the most adequate possible object for minds framed like our own to conceive as lying at the root of the universe"

(p. 115). (The italics are mine.) And, finally, I will permit myself to quote one more passage:

“Just as within the limits of theism some kinds are surviving others by reason of their greater practical rationality; so theism itself, by reason of its practical rationality, is certain to survive all lower creeds. Materialism and agnosticism, even were they true, could never gain universal and popular acceptance, for they both alike give a solution of things which is irrational to the practical third of our nature and in which we can never volitionally feel at home” (p. 126).

Are we to infer from this that “universal and popular acceptance” is to be considered the criterion of truth? I don’t see how we could interpret Professor James otherwise.

Yet certain persons considered that Professor James was preaching a doctrine calculated to estrange people from religion and reproached him for it. It is easy to see from what has just been said how little foundation there is in that accusation; nevertheless he was very sensitive to this criticism, and devotes a whole chapter of his volume on *Pragmatism* to showing its worthlessness. The reason of the accusation lay in the circumstance that many could have wished there had been more insistence upon the character of the God of Justice, in the sense of an avenging God, the punisher of the wicked. I have already explained that this notion is not absent from James’s writings, but that he does not like to

emphasize this result of his theology; while exalting (as a result of his temperament and for the sake of philosophic dignity) the positive side of practical religion, — that is to say, while assuring the good and the brave that their efforts are not in vain and their probity unheeded, — he implies the converse or negative side, the condemnation of the wicked. But it is true that theoretically he leaves open the question what idea pragmatism ought to have of God: "Pragmatism has to postpone dogmatic answer, for we do not yet know certainly which type of religion is going to work best in the long run" (p. 300). He affirms that he has spoken for himself alone in the case of this particular problem.<sup>1</sup>

We can deal more briefly with the topic of pragmatism and religion elsewhere than in America. I shall have to do little more than repeat what I said apropos of pragmatism and the popular philosophy of action. Especially in respect to other philosophies the same motifs are in operation which give its distinctive tint to the pragmatism of Mr. Schiller compared with that of Professor James. In a word, Professor James has a free field and writes with a calmer nerve. The line of demarcation between a scientist or university professor and a plain public of cultivated people being scarcely perceptible in

<sup>1</sup> For passages of a pragmatic cast in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, see pp. 15, 39, 327, 332, 377, 378, 443, 445.

America, Professor James speaks to a people, without concerning himself very much with the opinion of professional philosophers.<sup>1</sup> These, however, attack him a good deal on points of detail; but pragmatism is not at all affected or injured by them. And before the public, he continues his plan of not contending but expounding or interpreting in lectures and books; and his ideas are such as people want to hear. In England a philosophic doctrine is discussed first of all among philosophers or scientists, and the verdict depends on these, not on the public at large. Now there exists in England a philosophy, already a century old, which in its positivism is the very antipodes of pragmatism. Among its representatives are the followers of such men as Mill, Huxley, and Spencer. It is they who must be reckoned with, and it is against them that Mr. Schiller wields his lance. If we examine pragmatism, Mr. Schiller says, in its religious aspect, "we shall find that it has a most important bearing. For *in principle* pragmatism overcomes the old antithesis of faith and reason. It shows on the one hand that faith must underlie all reason and pervade it, nay, that at bottom rationality itself is the supremest postulate of faith. . . . On the other hand, it enables us to draw the line between a genuine and a spurious faith." (*Humanism*, p. XIV.)

<sup>1</sup> Yet he does show some concern about it in a recent article in the *Philosophical Review* (XVII, 1). But it was almost superfluous, for the success of pragmatism in America does not depend much on the speculative thinkers.



Schiller adds that it is "by chance" that pragmatism touches on this subject of the relations between faith and reason. Yet this is doubtful; otherwise, why this constant preoccupation with the subject even in Mr. Schiller's own writings? In the first "essay" of *Humanism* he devotes many pages to it. In another essay (p. 62) he refutes Lotze by taking the stand that the theory of monism "cannot be equated with (the idea of) God"; and the idea of an absolute God (instead of a personal God) "aggravates the problem of freedom, of mutation, and of evil." Again in *Studies of Humanism* he has one of his most important essays devoted entirely to *Faith, Reason, and Religion*.

We can equally surmise the importance of these religious prepossessions in relation to pragmatism by a discussion with Bradley cited by Schiller (pp. 3, 4). Bradley cannot endure this confusion between ethics and metaphysics: "Render the point of view absolute and then consider what you have done. You have not only become irrational but you have broken the bonds that unite you with all the great religions." The inverse is true for Schiller; it is Bradley who ruins ethics in wanting to make it independent of metaphysics; does he not say (p. 13), "our metaphysics must . . . be quasi-ethical?"

In its attitude toward theology, pragmatism in England seems to hold a rather different position. In America all theologians do not like this philos-

ophy which replaces their own. In their eyes pragmatism borders on emancipated theology; they have taxed it with impiety as we have seen. In other words, pragmatists are really the allies of the theologians, although the latter do not always understand it so. In England, on the contrary, where philosophy is far from being always well disposed toward theology, the theologians are only too happy to be able to call to their aid a William James, author of a great empirical *Psychology*, and yet a pragmatist, that is, a spiritualist. Mr. Schiller is already one of them, a spiritualist, so the assistance of Professor James is much more valuable. Like men in danger of drowning they have shown great alacrity in seizing the safety plank (as one of them called it) thrown to them by the American psychologist. Sometimes they have even been a little false to him. Such was that champion of an avenging God I mentioned in a previous chapter who justified himself on the authority of pragmatism, in supporting a doctrine of which James was not at all solicitous to be the patron. This alliance between theology and pragmatism in England (and upon the European continent, too, for that matter) will probably remind certain orthodox Americans of the treaty recently concluded in their country between the temperance societies and the beer brewers that they might together wage war on the whiskey distillers. The world sometimes sees fraternizations like that — all pragmatic.

Let us then conclude this chapter by saying that pragmatism is pre-eminently the product of a philosophic *temperament*, to use Professor James's own word. Indeed, it seems that his conception of the history of philosophy as a series of systems or methods constructed by different temperaments applies particularly well to his own philosophy. It is a curious thing, though, that he seems to believe that pragmatism, for its part, is destined to escape the fate of other philosophies which have had their day as being only accidental and personal. Pragmatism (he says) "has come to stay" (p. 47). This claim, at first sight, would scarcely seem to be justifiable. Yet Professor James may be right to this extent and in this sense, that a philosophy making use of no other lamps and guiding stars than criteria of a practical kind may come to be more and more the only one that men will cultivate. In that case it ought to be understood that the philosophy of the crowd, or one adapted to the faculties of the crowd, is far from being necessarily the true philosophy; but there are certain indications in the history of philosophy which favor James's opinion — with the reservation pointed out. There is, at the same time, in the history of pragmatism — the thing, not the word — a valuable proof of my arguments that the idea of judging a theory by its moral results is a simple product of circumstances and the *milieu*, — this will be taken up in our next chapter.

Respecting Le Roy, who in his *Dogme et Critique*

(1907) examines, from a pragmatic standpoint, this question of the value of religious dogma, at bottom he is in absolute agreement with the ideas of James in the matter. He only expresses them in a little different form, for he expresses them for a different public; I mean a public in which intellectual traditions are deeply rooted, — a public for which you cannot simply “substitute” utilitarian dogmas for theological or metaphysical dogmas, but for which you must subordinate the metaphysical element to the pragmatic element. For Le Roy the value of a dogma lies in the fact that it is capable of being “the formula of a rule of practical conduct.” The efforts that have been made to separate fundamentally these views of his from those of the Anglo-Saxon pragmatists seem to us fruitless and fine-spun.

## CHAPTER II

### PRAGMATISM OF THE MIDDLE AGES AND MODERN SCHOLASTICISM

- I. *Scholasticism was the pragmatism of the middle ages*: philosophy buttressed up theology, and the latter sustained the church in its social task. The emancipation of philosophy by the method of Descartes, a natural method, soon made necessary the re-formation of a pragmatic philosophy; for the shock to the beliefs held by the people respecting religion and liberty was too dangerous. When democracy triumphed in the nineteenth century, and philosophical speculations became accessible to all, it was necessary to hark back to a systematic pragmatism; *pragmatism is modern scholasticism*. At first negative pragmatism: philosophers did not apply philosophic method to practical problems, or excused themselves from doing so (Descartes, Locke, Leibnitz).
- II. Then came three great precursors of modern pragmatism — (positive pragmatism): *Pascal* formulates the pragmatic paradox in his *Pensées* by denying the rights of reason; *Rousseau* opposes his pragmatism to the “sensualist” school of the eighteenth century; *Kant*, after having killed the practical reason by pure reason, kills pure reason by the practical reason, solely through his anxiety to safe-guard social morality.
- III. Why the utilitarianism of the nineteenth century does not suffice: it is a purely persuasive ethical system (no one can force me to be benevolent toward others); the people need a morality based on authority, a sanctioned morality; they need the theological morality — which brings back pragmatism.

- IV. Superiority of the pragmatism of Kant to that of Messrs. James and Schiller, from the point of view of philosophy.
- V. Superiority of the scholastic systems to the modern pragmatist systems from the point of view of philosophy.

## I

MODERN pragmatism — I mean that which finally expanded into the movement over the destinies of which William James presides — harkens back to the precise period when the Cartesian philosophy began to make a breach in the scholastic philosophy.

What was the scholastic philosophy? Philosophy placed at the service of theology, *ancilla theologiæ*; while theology itself was nothing more than the justifier, the advocate if you will, of the church, *ancilla ecclesiæ*; and the church, in its turn, proposed to itself the enormous and delicate task of civilizing, or, more specifically, of moralizing, barbarian Europe, — a task, after all, which it accomplished in as admirable a way as was possible, humanly speaking.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, the church, a moral institution, had need of authority to restrain the barbarianism of the peoples who were invading the Roman Empire, and this authority she found in the exploita-

<sup>1</sup> Here again, for the sake of clearness in the exposition, I exclude the psychological element, which is never lacking in the religion of which the church has made use to attain her ends, — an element which, mingled with the other, the utilitarian, seems sometimes to be confounded with it in its action, but still remains distinct on analysis,

tion of the religious instincts and tendencies, or (if such language as this seems too irreverent) let us say the metaphysical ignorance of the peoples whose destinies she wished to control. Theological dogmas were needed imposed by the requirements of moral problems and which the dialectics of the schools had in charge to expound, justify, demonstrate, develop. And since cares of a practical kind absorbed the larger part of the energies of the peoples, this philosophy of utility had scarcely a rival. Hence philosophy was pragmatic in its very essence. Scholasticism is the pragmatism of the middle ages. The middle ages are the epoch of pragmatism triumphant.

And now what I have in mind to demonstrate, by a rapid sketch of the history of philosophy, is that we may invert the terms; that if scholasticism is the pragmatism of the middle ages, *vice versa* pragmatism is modern scholasticism.

One of two things is true: either mediæval theology and natural philosophy were in true and perfect accord, and in that case scholasticism was to be more and more recognized as the truth; or else they only agreed in outward appearance and philosophy, left to her own devices, contradicted Catholic theology.

To decide the matter it was only necessary to emancipate philosophy and see if it would still terminate in scholasticism. This is just what was going to take place in the sixteenth century. But

in the first place it would be false to say that our independent philosophy was unknown to the middle ages. If philosophy had not occasionally lifted her head, the formula *credo etsi absurdum* would not have been invented; if she had not had sometimes terrible longings herself also to sit in the seat of supreme authority, the dictum *credo quia absurdum* would not have been proposed. But her voice was stifled until at the Renaissance the minds of men were penetrated and inspired by a great spirit of freedom. And finally arrived Descartes, who declared himself unable to believe against his reason and proposed a *credo quia rationale*. He presented a philosophic method (which was only the natural scientific method brought back); and this philosophic method, supported by the authority of Bacon in England, was destined by the substitution of objectivism for subjectivism<sup>1</sup> to reach its climax in the denial of scholastic truth. And further, it must lead to a belief in the determinism of nature, — the *sine qua non* of science; and if this triumphed it would threaten the foundation of all the beliefs on which rested the moral and social order.

The philosophers understood the dangers of the “new” method. They heard the voice of the pragmatic conscience lift itself up within them, crying for quarter to the philosophic conscience. One after

<sup>1</sup> A subjectivism entirely conscious and voluntary in scholasticism (though not avowed), precisely like that of modern pragmatism, a thing which distinguishes both of them from other historic subjectivisms.



another and the greatest among them compromised. Bacon compromised, Descartes compromised, Hobbes compromised, Locke compromised, Leibnitz compromised, Newton compromised; even Hume compromised. They applied the philosophic method (which we now call positivism) to mathematics, to astronomy, to certain physical sciences having only a slight connection with theology and ethics. But when they came to what has been very well styled, even up to our day, the "practical philosophy," then invariably, some a little sooner, some a little later, they recanted, for they foresaw the formidable social cataclysm for which they would be responsible (and of which they would suffer themselves), if they went on to shatter opinions accredited as true and regarded as indispensable to the moral order. Bacon, while combating contemporary superstitions, still did not wish that the church should cease to instruct in religious beliefs, since if human knowledge depends upon the senses it is natural that divine truth should appear to us to be irrational. Descartes pretended to believe, and perhaps made himself think that he believed, that the method of his *Discours* led him necessarily from the *cogito ergo sum* to the existence of God, to God's moral perfection, and to the immortality of the soul. Hobbes, author of *The Leviathan*, writes: "The truths of faith must be swallowed at a gulp, like salutary but bitter pills: if you try to chew them you will probably spit them out." Locke is drawn by

reason to the belief in the existence of a first cause, or God; but as to the attributes of God, belief in the existence of an immaterial soul, in immortality, in the resurrection, we ought to allow ourselves to be guided by the church. We shall return to Leibnitz further on. Spinoza starts from a purely naturalistic conception of ethics akin to that of the *homo homini lupus* of Hobbes (that man agrees to morality in order to satisfy, at least in part, his egoistic instincts); but finally ends by recommending the purely persuasive Christian virtues of self-abnegation and of love of one's neighbor, which are in glaring contradiction with the principles laid down. Finally, Hume, who was at once the keenest and most magnificent genius and the most pitiless logician perhaps of all known philosophers, never dared to express his entire thought when confronted with the problems of the moral nature, but rather counselled men to abandon themselves in religion (which the Anglo-Saxons almost always confound with morality), to the sway of instinct and to the general opinion.

All this is negative pragmatism — if I may venture to make use of this term. It is a return to the *credo etsi absurdum*. Yet the reader will observe that at every new stage the philosophic method of Descartes, the *credo quia rationale*, advances more and more in the direction of morality and finally encroaches upon its domain. After Hume there remained only one step to take. Auguste Comte, at

the close of an interruption in the onward march, was to take this step. He created "social physics"; that is, he deliberately introduced into moral and social studies the rigorous method of science, or social determinism.

## II

Nevertheless there was, as early as the seventeenth century, a thinker whose intellect did not abdicate its throne so readily at the beck of the moral or religious consciousness, who saw distinctly that not only did the philosophic method of Descartes not lead to the moral and religious truths in the presence of which the thinkers whom I have cited laid down their arms, but that it was incompatible with them. He saw at once very plainly that reason gives us an unsatisfactory reply to the moral problem, and while endeavoring to understand the latter, was only accumulating new and insoluble questions. Such a thinker could not come to a halt before a simple "No admittance!"; logic must have all or nothing; he said "nothing"; one must choose between moral truth and intellectual truth; the former is more important to us than the latter; thus the irrational shall have precedence over the rational. Pascal is the first to deliberately formulate in modern times the pragmatic paradox. And from the very start he formulates it with infinitely more precision, logic, and courage than any one

following him, James himself perhaps included. The more we allow ourselves to be guided by reason (he says) so much the more do we deviate from moral and religious truth, and so much the more, then, must truth be irrational. He pushes to the limit the thesis in order to be compelled to fall back on the antithesis. He who said "*La dignité de l'homme consiste dans la pensée*" will only make use of this belief in order to bring a charge of deception against human reason and fall back upon truth divine. The *credo quia absurdum* is revived.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We must recollect that Pascal, having left only fragments of his great work on the Christian religion, and so being always seen through the medium of his editors, is imperfectly seen. It is always said that Pascal wanted to show the rationality of religion. He wanted to show the very opposite, *i. e.*: Man turns toward religion because his reason does not furnish him the truth he is seeking — Does that prove the rationality of religion? A man must "lay a wager" that religion is true, must become "stupid" (*s'abêtir*) in order to find the true in religion; the mind must receive "grace" in order to persuade it to accept religion, — this is Pascal's idea. We have not much confidence in the testimony of his contemporaries. Take, for instance, the famous fragment (ed. Havet, Art. XXIV, 26): "Men despise religion; they hate it and at the same time fear that it may be true. To remedy this state of things we must begin by showing that religion is not contrary to reason; then that it is worthy of reverence, give it our respect; next render it worthy of love, make men ardently wish that it were true, and then show that it is true. Worthy of reverence in that it has so well understood man; worthy of love because it promises him welfare and happiness." Is it possible to discover a more banal vindication of religion? Either these men who pretend to have received these revelations from Pascal himself did not rightly understand him, or else Pascal, when he had set forth his scheme, had not yet formulated it clearly in his own mind. "Worthy of reverence in that it has so well understood man; worthy of love because it promises him welfare and happiness" — that is, to be sure, pragmatic, but hardly original. If we must depend on this to render Pascal profound, what a quantity of profound thinkers the world has produced!

The reason is our natural organism of thought and instrument of knowledge; hence if we decline to submit to it there must be special motives. In the case of Pascal eternal preoccupation of the infinite (*le tourment de l'infini*) was undoubtedly one of these (the sentimental element in religion); but there were also utilitarian predilections, and so of a pragmatic kind, which led him to his *credo quia absurdum*. I should even venture to affirm these to have been the determining motives since he went and joined himself to the Jansenists who were chiefly concerned in reacting against the ethics of Jesuits, which ethics were menacing society with anarchy.

Pascal is the author of the *Lettres Provinciales* as well as of the *Pensées*; in his own day he was known solely as the author of the *Provinciales*. The idea of revolution implied in the method of Descartes had made but a slight impression on a very small élite of thinkers; the church, whether Catholic or Protestant, remained mistress of men's hearts; morality sanctioned by religion continued to be the popular philosophy; hence the *Pensées* must be regarded as a kind of prophetic book; Pascal could see that the final outcome of Descartes was to be Comte and Spencer, and two hundred years in advance he tried to parry the blow.

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Indeed, after Pascal, science — which is nothing more than philosophy applied to the phenomena of

nature — could not but acquire an ever-increasing consciousness of itself and of its power. And to every forward step of science there will correspond a pragmatic reaction. In proportion as these forward movements become more formidable, the reactions are bound to become more decided, since the incompatibility of the two systems is thereby thrown into greater prominence.

The first manifestation of pragmatism, which, at the time it appeared, had a certain degree of importance, was that of Bayle. As early as the close of the seventeenth century the premonitory tokens of the impulse toward emancipation which was to characterize the age of Voltaire became numerous. Catholicism was still sufficiently strong to resist; but Protestantism, which rejected the idea of authority in religious and moral matters, had to foresee the approach of the time when enemies of religion simply by drawing out to their legitimate conclusions the consequences of free thought — another phrase for the philosophic method of Descartes — were going to conflict with dogma. Protestantism took refuge in revelation, a step which was in opposition to the ecclesiastical tradition of Catholicism on the one hand and to rationalism on the other. Bayle based the acceptance of this “revelation” on the pragmatic paradox: reason leads us astray instead of guiding us. Taking up again the antinomies of Zeno of Elea, he showed how philosophy leads to scepticism. Truth, then, must be a-rational

or irrational (it amounts to the same thing); it must be revealed. It should be added, however, that, while Bayle was very pragmatic in his objects, he was very much of a philosopher by temperament, and he allowed himself to be drawn on farther than was proper for his purpose. He proved too much. He proved that a society of atheists could be moral. Hence his system seemed as dangerous to Protestants as to Catholics; and it was, in the long run, the rationalists who profited by his penetrating criticism. The debt of Voltaire to Bayle's *Historical and Critical Dictionary* is well known.

What Bayle accomplished on the Continent Shaftesbury accomplished in England, where Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke were disquieting minds of a pragmatic temperament. Taking up for his own account the deductions of Bayle (that reason only points out the errors in our philosophic opinions, but is not a lamp to our feet in practical life, is indeed dangerous to follow), he proposes a religion and a morality based on a rational appreciation of social problems, but absolutely independent rationally from every question of principle, *i. e.*, ignoring philosophy proper. There was in this a vague anticipation of the system of the two reasons—the pure and the practical—of Kant, whom we shall now very soon reach.

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The most formidable pragmatic movement before our day — we cannot yet see how far the one in the

midst of which we are living will lead us — is that of the second half of the eighteenth century, and the greatest pragmatist was, and probably always will be, Jean Jacques Rousseau. The movement at that time, like that of James, owes its importance in large measure to the historical circumstances amid which it was produced. The old social edifice was threatening to fall in ruins; and it was in France that the great attempt to repair and restore it was to be made, for the abuses of the *ancien régime* were there manifesting themselves with more virulent power than elsewhere. All the French philosophy of the eighteenth century was more or less pragmatic. But, generally speaking, thinkers either contented themselves with attacking the old ideas in their theoretic feebleness or in their consequences (the Encyclopædists and Voltaire); or else they proposed political theories, while leaving in the shade the moral principles which ought to have been the foundation of said theories (Montesquieu); or, again, they drew up fine theories about man, king of creation, — theories which had only distant relations with concrete problems (Buffon). Rousseau alone squarely and clearly laid down the pragmatic question, "What is such and such a theory good for *morally?*" Rousseau starts out on that question in his very first Discourse on: "*Whether the restoration of science and the arts has helped to elevate morals?*" (and we may go back even farther and find similar ideas in the work of his youth, now



printed in his Complete Works). The principle of his answer is: Judge an idea by its social consequences; choose the philosophy you are going to preach to the people by its moral consequences: by so doing you will get *the truth*. The same theories inspire from one end to the other and with unerring logic the *Discours sur l'Inégalité*, the *Lettre sur les Spectacles*, the *Nouvelle Héloïse* (the two parts of which contradict each other diametrically, *except on this point*), *Emile*, and the *Contrat social*. He attacks the civilization of the past, — art, literature, science included, — for it has resulted in inequality, and consequently in war. Then in the case of those who favored this inequality, the wealthy, it has resulted in the taste for luxury which procures false and dangerous joys; in the case of others it has resulted in the frequent abandonment of the peaceable and natural occupations of life; it has killed out everywhere even the possibility of true and healthful pleasures. The theatre, for instance, needs the approval of the people in order to live, and, to secure this, it will flatter their passions, and, by presenting vice in amiable colors will encourage it; actors will accustom themselves to imitating feelings and sentiments instead of approving of them, and this is hypocrisy; etc., etc.

On the other hand, Rousseau attacks the philosophers of his time, for they exhibit man as necessarily the sport of his passions; they lead us to determinism and irreligion. In one way — though not in

so keen a way as Pascal — Rousseau had the prophetic eye. He had no need to read them; he knew even before they had published their works at what goal those writers would arrive who, under the pretext of enlightening men, undermined the moral beliefs necessary to good order and the happiness of humanity, — such authors, I mean, as Lamettrie (*L'Homme machine*, 1748), D'Holbach (*Système de la Nature*, 1771), and Helvétius (*De l'Homme*, 1771). In place of working to emancipate the minds of men together with them, Rousseau works against them. He had left them as soon as he had caught a glimpse of the way their speculations were going. In the second of his *Dialogues*, — his supreme work, in which "Rousseau" judges "Jean Jacques," — he says of himself, "I never saw him listen patiently to any doctrine that he believed to be hostile to the public good." (*Œuvres*, ix, p. 94.) But let us not forget that he toiled to replace one slavery, that of the artificial civilization of his time, by another slavery, that of morality, which seemed to him, not without reason, to be less dangerous for the people than that of knowledge.

The famous first phrase in *Émile*, "Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Creator; everything degenerates in the hands of man," is only a striking application of the pragmatic principle, for it means this: Man, as he leaves the hands of the Creator, is man simple and unreflecting, who does not concern himself anxiously about the true but

about the useful, and who arranges his life from the practical point of view. The civilized man, on the contrary, is the man who develops his understanding and attains to the determinist philosophy of causes and effects in the domain of ideas, and to social inequality (the cause of all the evils of civilization in the domain of morals). For Rousseau himself affirmed that, unless he condemned his own understanding to inaction, man could not help developing the very civilization which he, Rousseau, attacks.

It must be said in favor of Rousseau — or was it only shrewdness on his part? — that he never condemned science itself, but only its vulgarization. And that is a point in which he was, it seems to me, much superior to many pragmatists before and after his time. But that he refrained from always uttering all his thought appears to me to be clear. In the last pages of the first Discourse, for instance, he recognizes that the science and the arts are not bad for everybody, and that surely in the hands of an intellectual élite they are even excellent things. Quite naturally, people did not understand these reservations, adroitly made, and the *Discours* were attacked as though they were not to be found in them. Rousseau returned to this point and insisted on it in the discussion that followed, — ready, however, to forget it again in writing his subsequent works, the *Émile* particularly.

Why does he feel the necessity of returning to

this question again in the *Dialogues*? "People persisted," he says in the third dialogue, "in accusing him of wanting to destroy the sciences, the arts, the theatres, the academies, and to immerse the world again in barbarism. But, on the contrary, he has always insisted on preserving existing institutions, maintaining that their destruction would only remove the palliating circumstances, while leaving the vices intact, and substitute brigandage for corruption." The defence is quite unfortunate. It is very much as if one should say to a man who has lamed himself and walks with crutches, "You are right in walking with crutches, for under the present circumstances you walk better so. And not merely that, but you have done well to break your legs, for, if you had not had this misfortune you would have had to go without crutches." Was Rousseau himself satisfied with his statement? It would be surprising if he had been; but he had somewhat changed his point of view since the first Discourse; or let us rather say he had become better aware of the true spirit of his philosophy, and now realized that he had to choose between philosophy and pragmatism. His pragmatic work was then put above his disinterested solicitude for the truth. He decided to spread abroad useful beliefs and to relegate to a subordinate place the logical agreement of thoughts. It is perhaps the reason that explains why he gave up, as early as 1762 or 1763, writing his treatise on the sensations *La morale sensitive ou*

*le matérialisme du sage*, the subject of which, however, fascinated him (see the *Confessions*, ix). He had in mind to show in it how much our ideas, our sentiments, our moral actions depend on physical conditions and anterior physiological states. He meant to affirm that, knowing these physical and moral relations, man would be better able to manage his passions, or master them. It was Condillac, whose friend he had been and with whom he had associated for several years, — and to whom he perhaps owed his theories on the origin of language, — who succeeded in inspiring him with the idea of writing this book. But as he went on farther along the road of pragmatism, Rousseau must have feared lest such a “treatise” might demonstrate too much, — that is, might suggest the idea of irresponsibility, — and be employed to establish the foundation of “social physics,” as Comte would one day phrase it, or of a mere “science of morals,” as Lévy-Brühl would say; in short, lest it should be furnishing arms against his other writings and the purpose he had in view in writing them. So he dismissed it from his mind and was not perhaps very sorry when one day at Môtiers he discovered that notes which he had already begun to collect for this work had been stolen or got lost during the precipitate flight from Montmorency after the condemnation of *Émile*.

Thus the work of Rousseau remains pragmatic from A. to Z. And, after having rejected all

a-moral or immoral philosophy and theology, he draws up the positive creeds of these in the *Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar*, which will remain the profession of faith of the pragmatists of all times. It affirms as a fact the existence of an absolute moral law which makes itself known to man through the conscience as the voice of God. Unless it observes this law the world condemns itself to anarchy. Furthermore, the world must, under penalty of injustice, be completed (that is, have an epilogue) elsewhere. To the beliefs just mentioned must be added belief in the existence of the soul and of the continuance of the personal life after the death of the body.<sup>1</sup>

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Rousseau, owing to special circumstances, addressed his pragmatic doctrines to an entire people. In Germany matters had a different complexion. Civilization had been slower in penetrating, and the first thinkers appeared at the epoch of the Renaissance and of the Reformation, a weighty and momentous epoch from the social point of view, and in which it was impossible to ignore the practical circumstances of life. The early German philosophers are almost as much preoccupied with the moral spirit of their doctrines as with the theoretical aspect of them. The result of this was that the

<sup>1</sup> The *Monist* for October, 1909, publishes an extensive study by the author on *Rousseau a Forerunner of Modern Pragmatism*.

conflict between philosophy and life was slower in appearing. And when it did appear it was upon philosophic ground. Leibnitz and Wolf are the two great names of German philosophy in the eighteenth century. Leibnitz rose into the highest speculations in pure mathematics, and his metaphysical speculations are, at first, of a character purely intellectual. But he forced himself to bend the latter to the exigencies of a practical philosophy, and wrote his pragmatic *Theodicy*, a generous attempt, perhaps, but which wrought more evil than good to the cause; for it inspired in Voltaire his tragically witty *Candide*. That the *Theodicy* was saluted as a great work in Germany tells us much of the status of mind in that country; evidently that sort of philosophy was wanted there. But the typical popular thinker of Germany was Wolf. He conceived a philosophy which at the very outset should satisfy at once theoretical aspirations and practical aspiration, and show how we do not wish to dispense with the former and ought not to dispense with the latter. Wolf places them calmly in juxtaposition without over much troubling himself whether they work well in harness or not. Philosophy is the science of the possible, — of the possible (1) in the domain of the intellect; that is, metaphysics (ontology, cosmology, psychology, and natural theology); and (2) in the domain of the will; that is, practical philosophy (ethics, political economy, politics). Morality, then, is put on one side, and psychology on

the other, — so, since we hold them carefully separated, they will not clash. Yet the penetrating criticism of Hume ran its course in Germany, sapping at their foundation the facile combinations of Wolf. The problem of the relations between pure reason and the practical reason was then bound to be laid down, but it was to be strictly upon the ground of philosophy this time — not as in France in the writings of Rousseau. Kant tackled the problem with his well-known vigor; after having been inspired by Hume he accepted his final inspiration from Rousseau. With Hume later he recognized that the maladroit juxtaposition of the determinism of natural phenomena and of the contingency of moral phenomena was untenable. Moral and natural phenomena intersect and interlace continually; the phenomenal world is *one*. Is it determined or free? that is the question. Kant replies: the world *seems* to us strictly determined in all its parts; more than that, our understanding cannot conceive of the world except under the aspect of determinism the most absolute. But if it were the absolutely true, the consequences would be such that we cannot accept. There is no other resource except to declare that the determined world is only an appearance (phenomenal), but that behind this phenomenal world there is another world that our intellect must assume (an “intelligible” world) which is the true one, and in which contingency (*i. e.*, freedom) is conceivable. To express it in a nutshell, Kant, after



having slain the practical reason by pure reason, faces about, terrified, to now slay pure reason by the practical reason. He begins by abandoning himself entirely to the pure reason, and this by virtue of its empty nothingness throws him back into the arms of the practical reason. Like Pascal he emphasizes the thesis (of determinism) in order to be forced to throw himself back into the (pragmatic) anti-thesis: *credo quia absurdum*.

Kant laid down in immutable terms the alternative, pragmatism *or* philosophy, not pragmatism *and* philosophy; pure reason *or* practical reason, not pure reason *and* practical reason. If the intellectual "noumenal" world is different from the phenomenal world it means that either one or the other is a deceptive appearance; if one is true, the other not in harmony with it is false. It is impossible to maintain that the phenomenal world is not in harmony with the intellectual world, but the latter is in perfect accord with the former. Kant decides in favor of the intellectual world, in favor of pragmatism; the phenomenal world is therefore deceptive; pure reason, the human intellect, is sacrificed. Kant has tried, however, to reconcile them by his *Critic of the Judgment*. But as much as his work of separation was definitive and absolute, as much was his attempt at co-ordination (though perhaps ingenious) defective. His successors have seen this very clearly and have taken another course.

Fichte proposed a plan of harmonization by the *absorption of the pure reason in the practical reason*. The phenomenal world (determinist) is the mode of manifestation freely chosen by the absolute *ego* (intelligible). Hence freedom is *before* the world, determinism prevails after the *ego* has manifested itself, — but never pure freedom and determinism *together*. This position excludes pragmatism, for freedom *in* the actual world is precisely what it wishes, the rest is indifferent.

Schelling gropes in genial fashion in the super-sensible realms.

Hegel *absorbs the practical reason in the pure reason*. The transcendental Idea manifests itself not freely, but, on the contrary, after a determined mode (according to its intrinsic nature); but to conscious man this transcendental idea manifests itself as having a moral or intellectual end. The moral character of the Idea (that is to say, so understood by the human intellect) betrays, in the anthropomorphic character Hegel attributes to it, ineradicable pragmatic prepossessions. But Schopenhauer did to death these pragmatic fancies by declaring that the transcendental idea which was realizing itself in the world was also a-rational, a "Will" without moral purpose, indifferent to human reason, to man; such, said he, did experience reveal it to be. Schopenhauer thus withers up the last roots of metaphysical optimism and moral transcendentalism. Hartmann rounds out the subject by declaring the

"Will" of Schopenhauer to be unconscious. The "Unconscious" is a step in advance of "Will," simply because will is still a moral term. In fact, by denying the moral element of Hegel's *Idea* Schopenhauer had already abandoned the pragmatic ground of ethics. Hartmann, by calling the will "unconscious," deprives the Absolute even of its psychological character; that is to say, he really removes the metaphysical problem, blots it out; his metaphysical "Unconscious" is as vacuous as Spencer's "Unknowable." Hartmann soon realized this, and he abandoned the "unconscious" for a simple "Phenomenology of the moral consciousness"; which means science, or psychology of morals, pure and simple.

Thus transcendentalism, in trying to save some scraps of practical reason with the pragmatism of Kant, saw itself obliged to abandon its positions one by one in order to arrive at its own proper negation. And so, in German speculation at the end of the nineteenth century, we reach this result: the practical reason cannot assert its rights in philosophy; either it remains silent, or else clings to the pure reason. Kant was right: pragmatism *or* philosophy; but when he chose pragmatism he took the wrong road, intellectually speaking.

## III

Thus we have so far three great pragmatic manifestations, — that of Pascal (in opposition to what is implied in the method of Descartes); that of Rousseau (in opposition to the sensualistic philosophies of the eighteenth century); that of Kant (in opposition to Hume). I might give an exposition, from this point of view, of the philosophy of the nineteenth century; but the fluctuations between pragmatism and philosophy being more rapid, are also less potent and have not the same importance. Let me mention, in passing, the French spiritualistic and eclectic movement (Royer-Collard, Maine de Biran, and especially Cousin) against the menacing scientific spirit; the reaction against the German materialism of Büchner, Vogt, and Moleschott, — which was only a revival of the theories of Lamettrie, D'Holbach, and Helvétius, profiting by recent scientific acquisitions, — a reaction on the part of theologians, philosophers like Lange and Ulrich, or Lotze, or even Fechner. Lotze is the modern Leibnitz, and upon a conception of the world of a mechanical cast, seeks to construct a teleological system. Fechner has a scientific mind thirsting for mystery. But these attempts at reaction were but as dikes of sand swept away without effort, one after the other by the rising flood, formidable and rapid, of the scientific movement of the nineteenth

century. The philosophers, in their task of synthesizing the acquisitions of the workers in science, every day more numerous and indefatigable, were scarcely able to keep up with them. Comte appeared and formulated the aspirations of science in his great work. Taine appeared, and Spencer. And how many, like Darwin and Wallace, after they had done so much to promote the progress of science, in the sequel made attempts to block it! So James, yesterday the author of *Psychology*, to-day the author of *Pragmatism*. Yet on English and Anglo-Saxon ground the struggle against the scientific spirit had for a long time an aspect quite different from what it had either in France or Germany. It will be interesting for us to glance at this for a moment.

From the time of the Reformation, philosophy in those countries occupied itself with the practical life more than in France. There was therefore less need of strong pragmatic reaction in the eighteenth century than in France. A Rousseau would have been superfluous; a Shaftesbury and a Clarke sufficed. And when Hume spoke he did not create in Great Britain a philosophical revolution as in Germany; his scepticism was simply ignored. Leaving critical speculation to its fate, Anglo-Saxon thinkers and writers developed philosophy on its practical side exclusively. The Scotch school alone had tried to reply. The real pragmatic reaction against Hume was the Utilitarianism of Bentham (who proposed,

without any further worry about the principles of philosophy, the maximum of enjoyment and the minimum of suffering for all men), and allied theories such as Malthusianism. But these economic and social theories were not set in formal opposition to those of Hume; they were constructed alongside and independently of philosophy. Even in the writings of Mill, who later resumed, on the one hand, Hume's studies of the theories of knowledge, and, on the other, the utilitarian doctrines of Bentham, the relation between the two parts of the fabric is far from being apparent at first sight. In the meanwhile utilitarianism did not succeed; for utilitarianism is pragmatism based on the persuasive reason; that is to say, that it provides no sanction for morality apart from, or higher than, man. Tell a man in practical life that it is more rational for him to renounce his advantage or profit in such and such a matter, and for his neighbor to do the same in another case, or tell him that there is a system of equilibrium involved which is delightful to contemplate from the intellectual point of view, and he will laugh to scorn your "rational" and your "intellectual." Or, again, urge upon him that some one else may refuse to obey the moral law if he does not see him doing as much, and it is clear that he will not feel himself obliged to do more than observe the outward *appearances* of morality; if that is all that is necessary to induce another to live the moral life he will submit to that. The only trouble

is that the other man will reason in the same way, and everything will crumble to pieces. Utilitarianism has no reason to urge to hinder me from putting my interest before that of others, or to make me take into consideration the interest of another if I do not want to, or to ignore his interest if I have the power. On the utilitarian theory a Napoleon is entirely justified. Man must feel above him a power that *forces* him to be just, and this power must speak to him directly, — for example, through the power of the church, — or indirectly through the voice of conscience, which has no force unless it represents the voice of God. Utilitarianism is perhaps a very noble ideal of character, though utopian, as is also Malthusianism, — and, one cannot help adding, an ideal conceived by men a bit naïve and shallow. Suppose a person feels that he is, and really is, a superior person, would it be rational that he should sacrifice himself to an inferior? Evidently not. It would be idiotic for him to do so, and for others to ask it of him. Utilitarianism, then, only offers egoism as a moral principle, — egoism admissible in the case of superior persons, regrettable in the contrary case. It exalts anarchy into a principle.

Hence utilitarianism, although plainly inspired by pragmatic ideas, was opposed by the traditional morality based upon religion, — and that, too, in the name of pragmatic principles; for pragmatism without religious sanction would not suffice.

There were, it is true, some attempts at reconciliation, such as the Hegelian ethics of Green, or the emasculated evolutionism of Sidgwick, or the mitigated utilitarianism of Leslie Stephen. But these could be only temporary remedies. The always-rising tide of science swept away from ethics its every sanction, irresistibly moving on until it reached deterministic ground. And when people saw the belief in the old popular ethics of the conscience, the ethics guaranteed by God and immortality, menaced as it had been a century previous in France, going to wreck and ruin, swept away not merely by philosophical criticism but by the affirmations of scientists, and by utilitarianism, their minds were filled with a kind of panic. This rocking and quaking ground under their feet must absolutely be abandoned; cost what it might, authority in morals must be secured. Then began a period of famous personal conversions to Catholicism, at the same time that there was manifested in the bosom of the established church as a body a strong tendency to fraternize with Catholicism. This period is even to-day not yet passed, and only the triumph of pragmatism might perhaps avail to arrest it. Then also it was decided to lend a more attentive ear to spiritists and occultists; if they perchance were right, then "materialism" (for this is the name still given to science by moralists and theologians) would be vanquished. Some great names were added to the list of these mystics, — such as Lord



Kelvin and William James. In Anglo-Saxon countries the founding and successful carrying on of these societies for physical research was really and pre-eminently a pragmatic suggestion. For moral and sentimental reasons they set their hearts on proving, by such means, immortality, the existence of spirits, and God. It is evident that these societies do not exhibit the complete disinterestedness which we find in the researches of Frenchmen like Flammarion, Jules Bois, Richet, or Italians like Morselli and Lombroso.

Catholicism is a refuge for very exalted intellects or for very plain ones, for a Pasteur or for a Joan of Arc. We live in an epoch of intellectual mediocrity, and the masses begin to be both too well informed to remain Catholics and not well enough informed—and never will be—to become such again on their own initiative. On the other hand, the occult sciences advance but slowly; people can't wait for them; it is even uncertain whether they will ever yield entirely reliable results. Hence, entangled more and more in the meshes of science, there was only one course to take: the pragmatic spirit must cease to act on the defensive and assume the offensive. In order to hinder philosophy from absorbing ethics, ethics must absorb philosophy. In other words, the pragmatic spirit shall set up as a system and become "Pragmatism"; refuse the right to exist to every philosophy that is not expedient from the human point of view; cease to consider ration-

ality as a criterion of truth; in short, declare that a doctrine must be judged by its practical consequences. If these consequences seem good for the human race, the doctrine is true; if the consequences are unfavorable to the progress of society and to the happiness of the individual, it is false. This is tantamount to reducing the philosophic reason to the practical reason. Not being able to vanquish philosophy, and yet not being willing to allow its spirit to prevail, pragmatism is trying to do precisely what the church in the middle ages did — make a servant of philosophy. Philosophy is not its own end; it must simply serve the interests of humanity; and if, of its own initiative, it showed a tendency to deviate from this way, it would be necessary to *force* it to return to the road of opportunism. Man must not adjust himself to philosophy, but philosophy adjust itself to man.

So pragmatism is, in fact, as I have said, *the modern scholasticism*. It is only a new way of affirming the traditional beliefs necessary to humanity, — God, freedom, immortality. When scholastic pragmatism was finally discomfited and beaten by science in the nineteenth century, the Protestant pragmatism was formed. And, like scholasticism, the pragmatic speculations of Messrs. Dewey, Schiller, and James are only attempts to harmonize natural and scientific philosophy with the pragmatic imperatives.

## IV

And they are wholly fruitless attempts, — here once more this is perfectly evident.

For, in the first place, I must repeat now, just as in the case of scholasticism and of Kant, that one of two things is true: either the pure reason and the practical reason (I make use of these convenient terms) do not intrinsically contradict each other, and in that case there is no need of pragmatism; or else they do intrinsically contradict each other, and in that case the practical reason must contradict pure reason, pragmatism must contradict science.

But this is not all. Looking attentively at the matter, the superiority of Kant as a thinker, that Kant whom the pragmatists so affect to despise, is dazzlingly conspicuous. For his part he had very clearly grasped the idea of the irreducibleness of the dilemma thus stated, and that practical reason and pure reason are in hopeless contradiction. Hence only one way presented itself to his mind (and only one way *could* present itself) by which we should be permitted to affirm at once the laws of pure reason and of practical reason, and that is that the data of pure reason are only appearance (seeming), that there lies back of the world of appearance (the phenomenal world) a real (a noumenal) world where freedom houses, and in the existence of which we are led to believe by our understanding;

in that way the conflicts between the pure reason and the practical reason may be conceived as being only in appearance; thus also determinism and freedom (with the corollary doctrines of moral conscience, immortality, God) are not *absolutely* excluded. Only — and here is, of course, the weak point — we are obliged to pass out of the phenomenal world in order to obtain this result; it is the only way. And the pragmatists, who have clapped themselves on the back in admiration of their doughtiness, modernity, and science in making uproarious fun of metaphysics and the noumenal world, and who have presumed to affirm the co-existence of freedom and determinism *within* the world of phenomena, have entirely forgotten Kant's object — namely that he assumed the existence of the noumenal world for the very purpose of not being obliged to end up either with determinism and its moral consequences or with absolute scepticism in the phenomenal world. The thing is as clear as it can be; inasmuch as there is incompatibility without appeal in the phenomenal world between pure reason, reason reasoning, scientific reason, on the one hand, and reason non-reasoning (reason of the heart that reason does not acknowledge or take cognizance of, as Pascal said), on the other hand, — an incompatibility proved by the very existence of a pragmatic philosophy different from philosophy itself, — pragmatism, by rejecting as pure twaddle the “noumenal world” of Kant,

is in consequence obliged to choose between pure reason and practical reason *in the phenomenal world*. It chooses practical reason, or reason non-reasoning, and rejects pure reason, or reason reasoning. It takes as its philosophic base the a-rational, or *irrational*, definitively, deliberately, absolutely. The mere title of an essay like that of Mr. Dewey, — *The Logical Conditions of a Scientific Treatment of Morality*, — is a defiance of good sense, since ethics, if it enters into the domain of science, has no special logical conditions, and if it does not enter there, it has nothing to do with logic.<sup>1</sup>

It is an astonishing exhibition of naïveté, when you come to think of it, the desire of men in this day to reconcile pragmatism and science. It amounts to a cool denial that there is any problem of philosophy, and the affirmation that common sense suffices to solve everything; that all the scholasticism of the middle ages had no reason-for-being; but that that imposing monument of the intellect means nothing, that it was just for the fun of it that for generations intellects like Johannes Scotus Erigena, Anselm, Abelard, Bernard de Clairveaux, Duns Scotus, and Thomas Aquinas grew white-haired in studying this problem and heaped absurdities on absurdities. Of

<sup>1</sup> Professor Dewey seems to realize this very well. He says "morality" in his title, not "ethics." As a matter of fact, *ethics* is studied from the point of view of the practical reason; but *morality* may be studied from the point of view of the practical reason *and* from the point of view of pure reason; as a part of ethics or as a part of the science of morals. Now Professor Dewey evidently has ethics in view. There is a curious hesitation in all this,

course! all they had to do was to hide their heads in the sand and they would not have seen the spectre of determinism peering out on every hand, and all would have been said and done — only the problem would have remained. This reconciling plan of the pragmatists implies that Kant is a madman, and that the nineteenth century, which almost wholly subsisted on Kant, was affected by the same madness. It means that we can at our leisure deny all science. In a word, it is to invert all philosophic thought. William James is right: it is a philosophic revolution. But when he tells us (*Pragmatism*, p. 170) that “common sense” is the philosophy adopted by pragmatism, does he mean it as serious doctrine, or is it a pathetic avowal concealed under a fine cloak of oratory?

The writer of these lines does not, however, accept the conclusions of the philosophy of Kant any more than William James does. It is impossible to establish any solid thought-structure whatever upon the “noumenal world.” Everything we affirm of it we affirm by reasoning upon data of an order different from that of pure reason, but after the manner of apprehending of pure reason, which, as we have seen, is deceptive from the point of view of absolute truth. And since its data in the domain of pure reason are false *per se*, which is the only domain in which we see it really at work, the presumption will naturally be against those data as respects what the pure reason shall affirm of another domain. We

cannot prove that its assertions, in the domain of the practical reason are false, since the real data of the practical reason are beyond our conception; but since it deceives us elsewhere where we *can* verify things, its verdicts must be, to say the least, received with caution in the realm where we cannot verify anything at all.

But in spite of everything, it remains true that if Kant was not to sacrifice the practical reason entirely (pragmatism), he could not attain his ends without calling in a noumenal world. And it is consequently also true that, if they reject this noumenal world, and yet continue to maintain the claims of practical reason, the pragmatists ought, logically, to reject the science which bases itself on pure reason. There is no room in the phenomenal world alone for both the pure reason and the practical reason; to adopt one is to reject the other, to affirm pragmatism is to reject science. The conclusion is that Kant is bad, but that pragmatism is infinitely worse. Kant proposes a solution which is not satisfactory; but the pragmatists can no longer even propose a solution, in so glaring a manner does the contradiction between the two terms to be reconciled appear in the way they are forced to state the problem. To get rid of metaphysics is indeed to be in agreement with the spirit of our times; but since the problem to be solved is such as it is, and since pragmatists desire to solve it in Kant's way, to do away with metaphysics is equivalent to cutting off the branch on which we wish to sit.

## VI

Another aspect of modern pragmatism calls for criticisms of a similar nature. In their desire to avoid certain difficulties encountered by pragmatists of former times, modern representatives, while gaining certain positions, have lost others, which, everything considered, were perhaps more important.

I have shown that the philosophy of Professor James and of his fellow-thinkers is really a *modern scholasticism*; for the results to be attained were fixed in advance, inasmuch as a theory is judged by its moral consequences. But I should perhaps rather have styled it a *Protestant scholasticism*; for pragmatism claims to be rationalistic in its religious or metaphysical conception of the universe, and this rationalism is a direct product of the religious reformation of the sixteenth century. Catholic scholasticism, taking the attitude of wise reserve, declared that the good was what God wished, absolutely so, man having no right of supervision whatever; in fact the Church handled dogmas and discipline in such a fashion that the divine will should appear to correspond to the needs of the people's social organization which it had made to its task to realize, and to whatever else was desirable for the benefit of humanity. In spite of its efforts, however, reality (the expression of the divine will) clashed so frequently with reason and with human ideas of jus-



tice that justifiers of "the ways of God to men" were always fain to declare the designs of Providence inscrutable, and that we should never consider ourselves obliged to attune the will of God to the human reason. Thus a "Theodicy," or "justification of God," from the point of view of human reason (and especially when one remembers the numerous difficulties removed by the acceptance of the dogma of original sin) was considered unnecessary, nay blasphemous. And these cautious reserves, regarding the justice of the Almighty, were, as a matter of fact, more needed in the middle ages, in which society was but slightly organized in comparison with our modern societies, and when crime and injustice more abounded. Thus, it was only at the epoch of the Reformation (after the Catholic church had often dealt a little too much after its own good pleasure with its supra-rational God) that people began to ask God to show his credentials, and to demand of him that he should conform to the moral code of humanity. There was a psychological reason for that, too. In Protestantism, which does away with the church as an intermediary between God and man, every one became his own priest and his own theologian. God manifested himself by the voice of conscience. But this voice, to be recognized as divine and pre-eminent, must satisfy the intellect, which is equivalent to saying that God must be judged according to man's reason and according to man's conception

of morality, after the standard of the creature. Only in case God would guarantee the moral order, such as man conceived it, could man consent to still adore him. The universe is *divine*, said scholasticism; the universe (or the divine) must be *moral*, says pragmatism; *philosophia ancilla theologiæ*, said the middle ages; *philosophia ancilla ethicæ*, says the contemporary thinker. The era of religious rationalism and of theodicies was opened, — a not altogether easy task, which Protestantism was forced to perform, and of which the work of Leibnitz will remain the most typical monument. In vain did Voltaire riddle with his arrows these interesting attempts; nothing better was found up to the time of the new theodicy of James, who is certainly picturesque and original with his doctrine of a strenuous universe preferable for man, one in which man can heroically take “risks,” thus accounting for certain human tragedies while reserving to God his rôle of *moral* sovereign of the world. According to our modern ideas, his theory is most certainly worth those of Leibnitz and Wolf, although still of precarious foothold.

Speaking generally, there is evidently an advantage in the Protestant pragmatism in one sense. If religion is to be in harmony with reason it will the more satisfy rational beings, and they can turn it to better account in the eyes of other men, and induce them to accept its principles and practise them. On the other hand, if the reason is authorized

to take a hand in the game, and, after a fashion, dictate the conditions of the divine action, or if we judge a religion as acceptable only on the recommendation of the reason, there will always be things absolutely unacceptable, even with the theory of "risk." One cannot see how little children who lack bread, and are dying of hunger because their father has been killed by an accident in the mines and because the mother is unable to make head against the world, have had the benefit of any "risk." Was not the laborer himself *obliged* to take the risk because the owner of the mine was not pragmatic enough to run the risk himself? And then is it an equitable risk to impose on man this struggle against the forces of nature, when in the face of them he finds himself as helpless as a little bird in a cyclone? A man may have all the genius of Napoleon and be stupidly burned in a San Francisco fire, or another may be drowned in a foundering ship like a rat in a trap, or be buried under the lava of a Mount Pelée or a Vesuvius. To account for such "risks," and so many more of a similar kind in this "pragmatic" fashion, looks like a rather poor joke; let us have Voltaire again; we are ready for another *Candide*! No. In such cases faith in a God willing and acting *independently of every moral consideration, and of every rational standard*, is infinitely more acceptable to man than the pragmatists' God who is supposed to guarantee the moral order. If from our point of view we cannot

conceive of him as good, at least we are not forced to conceive of him as wicked and odiously unjust. He is a God, I repeat, who can be the object of actual *faith*. The God of pragmatism only corresponds to a spurious something called a "reasonable" faith. In other words, if we are consistent with the rationalist principle of Protestant scholasticism, — namely, pragmatism, — God can only be worshipped by men who make very moderate moral demands upon him; but this was not necessarily so in the case of mediæval scholasticism. And this explains the conversion to Catholicism of certain great Protestant souls of whom I have spoken, and makes their action perfectly logical. Men like these are not able, it is true, to conceive of a moral God governing the world, since moral order does not exist; yet if they aspire to a solution of the mysteries of life, nothing hinders them from adoring an a-rational (or irrational), an a-moral (or immoral) God. *Nemo credit nisi volens*, St. Augustine has well said.

Unquestionably we shall find pragmatists appealing to mystery in some cases, and, *vice versa*, scholastics to reason; but *I* have to consider these systems under their logical aspect; and it is evident that pragmatists pass beyond the limits of their system in having recourse to the divine a-rational; and scholastics pass beyond theirs in having recourse to the divine rational. In practice numbers of Protestants are really Catholics; it is only those

who try to get their actions into harmony with their philosophy who care for a conversion in the presence of a notary, if I may venture the expression. The small people will remain Catholics or Protestants according to their place of birth, or will only change for reasons foreign to philosophic discussions.

It must be admitted, nevertheless, that for the pragmatists to take their stand upon these two propositions, (1) the rejection of metaphysics and (2) rationalism, was putting themselves in full agreement with the spirit of progress, and that even if, in applying them, difficulties as great as those of the past, or greater, rose in the path of the moralists, pragmatism was but obeying a necessity in making them hers. In short, we must admit that pragmatism, in taking the course it did, was within the logic of events. Pragmatism is, willy-nilly, a struggle against the scientific spirit, which causes all the actions of men to be seen in a determinist light, and is therefore capable of destroying the spirit of initiative; which renders inconceivable the voice of conscience as it is commonly interpreted; inconceivable the idea of a moral sanction, on the part of God, of the actions of men; inconceivable the idea of retribution or punishment after death.<sup>1</sup> Now the prag-

<sup>1</sup> The very idea of *retribution* is inconceivable in the determinist philosophy, but not, it must be borne in mind, the idea of life after death. The warped judgment which identifies belief in the survival of the soul with belief in retribution is a proof of the difficulty we have in separating the logical point of view from the pragmatic point of view.

matic spirit, which sees that a society organized without these doctrines<sup>1</sup> is going to destruction and death, seeks to react. And in this reaction, addressing itself as it does to the human reason, it will have more chance of triumphing without metaphysics and with rationalism — that is to say, by making use of precisely the same weapons that the intellectualist philosophers employ, and by attempting to attack them on their own ground; the struggle on metaphysical ground had, besides, been declined by scientists.

<sup>1</sup> Even if these doctrines were false, James says it in very plain terms; I recall the passage of *The Will to Believe* (p. 126): "Just as within the limits of theism some kinds are surviving others by reason of their greater practical rationality; so theism itself, by reason of its practical rationality, is certain to survive all lower creeds. Materialism and Agnosticism, *even were they true*, could never gain universal acceptance, for they both alike give a solution of things which is irrational to the practical third of our nature and in which we can never volitionally feel at home." (Italics are mine.)

## PART III

### PRAGMATISM AND TRUTH

*La civilisation a été de tout temps une œuvre aristocratique, maintenue par un petit nombre. L'âme des nations est une chose aristocratique; aussi cette âme doit être guidée par un certain nombre de pasteurs officiels formant la continuité de la nation. Voilà ce qu'une dynastie fait à merveille. Un sénat comme celui de Rome ou de Venise y suffit aussi. Des institutions religieuses, sociales, pédagogiques comme celles des villes grecques mieux encore. — RENAN (Lettre à Berthelot).*

## CHAPTER I

### THE TRIUMPH OF PRAGMATISM

Pragmatism will triumph, but because it is false, not because it is true; for, from the social point of view, the false is preferable to the true. Proofs of this by facts. Democracy overruns the world more and more; America is to-day where Europe will be to-morrow. How is it in America? The intellectual class does not reproduce itself; immigrants, sprung from inferior classes, overspread the country more and more. For this population and for that of the civilized world of the future, scientific determinism would be dangerous; such a population would make a bad use of the truth. Truth has nothing to do with life.

WE have seen that pragmatism is in accordance with the logic of events as far as the history of philosophy is concerned, and I would now point out that its success is in the same way in accord with the logic of history in the general sense of that word.

I have already pointed out that the American environment of Professor James is naturally one of pragmatic aspiration. Continuing that line of thought, I wish to point out that the pragmatic spirit, once planted in a community, can be uprooted only with extreme difficulty, the natural evolution of things being even seconded and hastened by accidental circumstances. And so it is that I come to share in part the opinion of William James that pragmatism as a philosophy will not be in fact so transitory as other systems, and that it has "come to stay." Only, while he thinks the reason of it to be that pragmatism is truer than other philosophies, I believe it is for precisely the opposite reason that pragmatism will stay, namely, because it is false — which I now proceed to explain.

One will have observed that pragmatism, if not in the case of its originators at least in virtue of its triumphs in the public mind, seems from the very start to correspond essentially to the needs or the desires of Anglo-Saxon peoples, while intellectualism is more favored by the Latin nations. Pascal himself, as author of the *Pensées*, is a favorite of Protestant writers, and Rousseau is infinitely more relished in Germanic than in Latin countries.<sup>1</sup> One might then be tempted at first sight to make pragmatism a question of race. Yet the belief in race-

<sup>1</sup> The only exception as far as modern originators are concerned would be the Italian Papini. I have shown elsewhere how erroneous it was to count men like Poincaré as pragmatists.



stocks goes on crutches in these days, and it seems that we are rapidly coming to the idea that in the greater number of cases races may well be effects rather than causes. So it seems to me wise to give over speculations of this kind. The more so that the explanation by race in our special subject would propound more problems than it could settle. Some one may say that the Anglo-Saxon is individualistic, the Latin not. But it happens that all the great minds of the sixteenth century in France were open and receptive to the individualistic spirit, which at that time manifested itself in religious reforms, and in many other departments of thought and life showed more individualism than has been found in Germany and in England even up to our day, — in the domain of thought, at least. And, conversely, you will find among Germanic peoples a much greater respect for hierarchical (artificial) superiority, in the political, social, and religious domain, than among Latin peoples. Germany is still the most aristocratically organized of all the countries that have taken part in the march of civilization; England is the land where the nobility has best preserved its prestige; and, with regard to America, as all strangers who sojourn here for any length of time are amused to observe, it would sometimes seem as if no people has a more superstitious regard for titles and reputations.

Similarly it is generally thought that southern climes render men more passionate than those of the

north, — and this is probably true; but in this case it would seem to follow that the southern races would need the more vigorous moral restraint that pragmatism offers, while the people of the north, colder, more the masters of themselves, might better do without it. Yet the very opposite is the case; the Latins have felt themselves very little drawn toward pragmatism; they have left it to the Anglo-Saxons. So in order to account for the actual conditions and philosophical preferences of the various peoples of to-day, let us take our stand simply upon clear, verifiable, purely objective circumstances.

Some of the following remarks have been made before; but it is indispensable to formulate them once more together with the new ones in order to give clearness to the demonstration.

When the Renaissance aroused the minds of men and favored individualism of thought, and, indirectly, of action, the Latin nations had already produced very advanced civilizations and acquired deep-rooted traditions; their social organization was, in a way, definitively arrested (Italy), or else was to still develop in the same direction as in the past, the bud being there and the flower contained in the bud (France). The consequences of this awakening of thought of the sixteenth century were therefore of a relative importance only in the social sphere, — of relative importance, I say, not null and void, for the religious wars in France show clearly that things

were not yet so firmly settled that they were safe from all shock. From the intellectual point of view, the opposite was true; for the Latin peoples, being organized, and organized according to the principles of authority exerted by the intellectual element over the people at large, free thought, even at the time of its appearance, remained almost isolated among the élite in its effect. Hence philosophers had no need of being too timid in their thought, and the church had sufficient power to counterbalance in the masses the effect of their ideas when they went too far, and often, indeed, dealt with them with great severity.

The Germanic races, on the contrary, were just beginning to take part in the forward movement of civilization at this critical moment when European thought was renewing itself. In organizing themselves they took as their guide the principle put forward by the Reformation; namely, that nations were composed of individually responsible units, and that as respects their moral life, they were entrusted to their own individual authority under the name of conscience, representing the voice of God. Under these conditions the question of consequences, the pragmatic question, became of primordial importance for the philosopher, and he had to take it into account in his speculations. The result was an intellectual atmosphere of a special sort (mitigation of pure thought and pragmatic preoccupation) from which even philosophers of the stamp of Kant could

not escape. England, in its island, carried forward still farther the system of individualism and with it its consequences. The masses with their low level of individualism need authority to hinder them from going astray, and it was necessary to bolster up the authority of the Protestant churches, so loose by principle in this regard, by a personal ethics *ad hoc*.<sup>1</sup> Writers like Sterne, Richardson, Addison, and all the religious authors, and the authors of the romantic, or emotional, school, of the eighteenth century in England, toiled at this task, while the philosophers tried not to mar their efforts.

But this was not all. Still another revolution took place, corresponding to the religious reformation. Society reorganized itself on the other side of the Atlantic, shaking off even the few "Latin" traditions which had so far been able to pass over into Germany and England through art and philosophy. In the New World democratic ideas were freer to manifest themselves than anywhere else; the "plain people" affirmed their rights more and more, and the social equilibrium ceased almost wholly to depend upon an élite whom the masses were supposed to follow; the balance of power passed over to these masses themselves. This change in the social centre of gravity was of the highest importance; pragma-

<sup>1</sup> I am here reverting in thought to the luminous pages of Leslie Stephen in his *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, in which he admirably elucidates the well-known love of compromise between pure thought and practical thought that characterizes English thinkers (I, p. 85). See, e. g., IX, iv, 43 (vol. II, pp. 357-369).

tism recommended itself more and more as the philosophy to adopt, since it is for the masses now that a philosophy is needed.

And now, mark it well, this renovation did not occur once for all, at the epoch (rather long, by the way) of the organization of the representative modern nation, but it is a change always going on. Not only would it be difficult to maintain that the American civilization has definitely shaped itself; not only have the few representatives of European aristocracy long ago disappeared, but the families of those who founded the nation are rapidly disappearing; and even American families of several generations are barely holding their own. This is a fact only too well known to-day, and the fiery homilies of President Roosevelt upon the "suicide of the race" are still fresh in all memories. Yet we must note that it is especially the cultivated classes who have few or no children,<sup>1</sup> and the university authorities have occasionally sounded the alarm (for example, Ex-President Eliot of Harvard University). The author of these pages knows intimately an institution of higher education having thirty-seven professors (without counting a pretty large number of tutors, lecturers, and assistants, none of whom, however, are married); of the thirty-seven professors

<sup>1</sup> If I am supported in my opinion that the intellectual classes are more desirable in a nation than others, then the problem of depopulation seems to me infinitely more serious in America than in France. We forget far too often this element of the subject in our discussions. Coarse pennies and pieces of gold are precisely equivalent in the eyes of our economists. What a singular aberration of mind!

twenty-two are celibates; and, of the fifteen married, three have two children, three have one child, nine no children at all. The small salaries are one of the principal causes of this state of things, and the slight esteem in which the people hold thinkers is responsible for the small salaries. But in any event, even if Americans of family and the cultivated classes should nearly hold their own in births, their relative importance would not the less on that account constantly diminish for (1) the families of the people are increasing, and (2) the population grows only through immigration. Viscount d'Avenel has recently given us some pieces of information at first-hand in his article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of January 1, 1908. We see by it how rapidly the changes are taking place, and how soon that which is called "American" in the population of the United States threatens to be submerged. Before 1880 there were only 280,000 immigrants a year; after 1902, 800,000; after 1905 the million mark was passed; in 1907 the number reached a million and a half.<sup>1</sup> In the great majority of cases these immigrants belong to the uncultivated classes, who in their native land have been used to looking at life in its material aspect of a relentless "struggle for existence," a conception which the new environ-

<sup>1</sup> I have before me extracts from the statistics of New Hampshire. In 1870 this state had 318,000 inhabitants, of whom 273,000 were of American birth and 45,000 of foreign birth. In 1900 the natives number only 243,000 and the foreigners 168,000. Figures are cited of a typical village in which there were registered, for the year, 29 marriages, 25 births, and 40 deaths.

ment rather seems to sanction. To all this must be added that the quality of the immigrants instead of growing better seems rather to deteriorate. Formerly the Irish, coarse perhaps, but intelligent, and the Germans, possibly poor but well educated, formed a large proportion of the new comers. From 1840 to 1860 there were counted in one hundred immigrants forty-three Irish and thirty-five Germans; to-day (1901-1906) in every hundred immigrants only five per cent are of those nationalities. On the other hand, immigration from other countries, up to that time scarcely represented at all, increases steadily. From 1901 to 1906, 28 per cent are Italians, 27 per cent Austrians from the more remote provinces, and 20 per cent Russians and Poles. Of course, the latent virile energy of these people produces even to-day superb results. But they cannot escape the action of the environment upon them; and, as certain ones of them reach in their turn the top of the social ladder, they become sterile in their turn. The result of this invasion of the inferior element, gaining a sort of refinement naturally produced by comfort and wealth, but never arriving at the degree of culture and distinction that the humanitarian civilization of Europe gives to the chosen few, James expresses in these words: "Never were as many men of a decidedly empiricist proclivity in existence as there are at the present day." (*Pragmatism*, p. 14.)

The repercussion of all this is that liberty of

thought is less to-day than formerly, for the reason set forth above; namely, that in an environment which only seeks in ideas means of action, and of action with a view to success in practical life, there are certain ideas that ought not to be thrown into circulation. Conclusion: we must muzzle thought.

The great era of the American nation, in political power, in social importance, is probably still to come; we have as yet seen only its preliminary manifestations; to-morrow will eclipse to-day as to-day has eclipsed yesterday. But the classic period, from the intellectual, literary, and philosophic point of view (we may except perhaps painting, sculpture, architecture, the arts where thought is not expressed directly and need have no bearing on social morals), is very likely passed. Even an Emerson, a brilliant genius perhaps, but thoroughly commonplace, has an influence to-day only because he is dead. If he should return and propose his undogmatic ideas, he would scarcely succeed. Or if a pastor should suddenly decide to leave the church, as Emerson did, and preach lay sermons, had such an one the same charm of speech, the same fetching eloquence that Emerson had, he would certainly come to grief. Or at most he would be asked to give some lectures before the bourgeois public of the "societies for ethical culture." The man who has succeeded in getting a large following is Lyman Abbott, who preaches active Christianity, Christianity disencumbered of secondary dogmas, but which preserving



all the *pragmatic* dogmas, which since Kant are called, in philosophic terms, the postulates of the "practical reason."

There is in all this one piece of testimony that cannot be refuted: the churches are not breaking up, ethical societies are no success. I repeat myself; but the reason is that if others find it to their advantage to leave this very patent fact in the shade, I find it mine not to let it be forgotten. Let us, however, be conscientious, and remember that one of the most famous books in the conflict between faith and science has been published in America, — J. W. Draper's *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* (1875). But there is no doubt that this book never had in America the success it had in Europe; it would not be published to-day and it would never be written to-day.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps some one may mention, in opposition to this statement, the name of Robert G. Ingersoll, the eloquent lawyer who for some years travelled about America giving noisy lectures against Christianity and religion. He is an exception that proves the rule. He was eloquent, and people liked to hear him. But he hardly had any following, and was completely forgotten immediately after his death in 1899. If you ask to-day for one of his books you will hardly be able to find it. I made a study of his work in the *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie*, of 1899 (Vol. 32, p. 512).

With regard to Andrew D. White's famous *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology* (1896), it does not by any means belong to the same class as Draper's book although this confusion is oftentimes made even by educated people. As plainly stated in the "Introduction," White's purpose is, in fighting against Dogmatism, to help the cause of religion. "My hope is to aid, and even if it be but a little, in the gradual and healthful dissolving away of this mass of unreason, that the stream of *religion pure and undefiled* may flow on broad and clear, a blessing to humanity" (p. vi). And not only religion but

All this indicates: *first*, that an objective philosophy grows more and more impossible; *second*, that America herself will choose another kind — one non-objective — through social interest; and, *third*, that it is better she should so choose, for, under the circumstances, and considering human nature, it is better for man to feel responsible for his actions and be bitted and curbed by religion in order that society may escape anarchy. I wish to emphasize this: I fully agree with William James that materialism and agnosticism, even if they were true, would “never be universally adopted.” (*Will to Believe*, p. 126.) I understand very well the solicitude of intelligent people, and of upright magistrates of all countries, who see not without terror the ideas of responsibility and of moral conscience being dissipated by the modern criticism which is maladroitly put at the disposition of the masses; for it is the church’s loss of influence that disorganizes the machinery of society, renders men indifferent to commercial honesty, to the moral obligation of the marriage bond, which

Christianity he defends heartily: “Far from wishing to injure Christianity, we . . . hoped to promote it” (p. vii). He himself distinguishes his book from Draper’s by saying: “He (Draper) regarded the struggle as one between Science and Religion. I believed then, and I believe now, that it was a struggle between Science and Dogmatic Theology” (p. ix). Finally: “My conviction is that Science, though it has evidently conquered Dogmatic Theology based on biblical texts and ancient modes of thought, will go hand in hand with Religion. . . . Thus, may the declaration of Micah as to the requirements of Jehovah, the definition by St. James of *pure religion and undefiled*, and above all the precepts and ideals of the blessed Founder of Christianity himself be brought to bear more and more effectively on mankind” (p. xii).

develops social egoism and frivolity. Life belongs not to the philosopher who says *primo philosophari deinde vivere*, but to humanity which says, as a mass, *primo vivere deinde philosophari*. And why should the philosopher — and it is above all of the pragmatic philosopher that I am speaking — not accept this? What right has he to force truth on people? Why should he meddle with their discussions?

What silly prejudice is this that truth has anything whatever to do with practical life? It was necessary to have reached our epoch of artless democracy to be able seriously to affirm such enormities that a man can be at the same time popular and profound, and that all that is beautiful is good. No! it is not a crime to propose expediency as the principle of life: the conflict begins only when it is positively proposed to *harmonize* philosophy and life. If humanity can be happier without philosophy, it has good warrant for scorning philosophy.

On the other hand, it should be clearly understood that the man who is to bear worthily the name of philosopher is he who looks the problem in the face, in its "philosophic" aspect; it is the man who peremptorily refuses to play the rôle of making his confrères believe, and perhaps himself too, that truth is lie and that lie is truth; and finally, if I must speak out my whole thought, it is he who declares pragmatism, in so far as it poses as a philosophy, to be a hoax.

It would perhaps be more agreeable to think that

life and truth go hand in hand ; but if, after all, such is not the case, is it the fault of man? Pragmatism seems to make philosophy responsible in the matter, What prodigious naïveté! Philosophy states the facts, that is all. And if there are people — and there evidently are, their number is legion — of too sensitive intellect to endure this lack of harmony between philosophy and practical experience, between truth and pragmatism, what good does it do to talk to them about it? A soldier may be a hundred times as intelligent as his superior, yet, for reason of discipline, it is highly desirable that he should act as if he believed in him. Leaving to one side ideas of God and of immortality, concerning which we can *know* nothing, and which belong to the domain of faith, let us suppose that the philosopher reaches the conviction that all our fine notions of duty, of conscience, of honor, are intrinsically only words and fool-traps — I say, let him keep the thing to himself. Nothing obliges him to propagate his conviction. In fact, it would be wrong for him to do so, for he would suggest to people, who otherwise would not have dreamed of doing it, to go and investigate the matter and worry over ideas that make them unhappy. The half-philosophers who are really conscientious will be much happier in remaining ignorant of all these things ; and the unscrupulous half-philosophers will be less mischievous in not knowing them. As to the philosopher himself he will lose his freedom because he wanted to think aloud.

This is the thing that it is important we should get well into our heads — that it is not the philosophers, but the pragmatists who insist at all hazards on consecrating as “truth” simple principles of social conduct. How much better it would be if they would only remain pragmatists root and branch and to the end of the chapter! Why burden themselves with philosophy which asks nothing of them? Why ask that philosophy *permit them* to organize life on the plan of “expediency”? Indeed, if they obey what it tells us it will prohibit them from so organizing it. But why should that concern them? Let them not lose their time in trying to reconcile at any price the irreconcilable. Let them be pragmatic; that is well, it is human, it is Christian; but let them not try to be pragmatic *philosophers*, for that cannot be.

To sum up: pragmatism will carry the day, not because it is true, — for, whatever in other respects the true may be, pragmatism certainly *is* false, — but because it is desirable. And I do not fear to cite here the dictum of Boutroux in his volume *Science et Religion*. “The victory does not go to that one of two living men who best knows how to string syllogisms together, but to him whose vitality is the strongest” (p. 343). The want creates the means. Pragmatism put itself forward as a system of morals for the masses, and probably will continue to impose itself more and more. Professor James and his fellows have formulated it, they have ren-

dered us a service. They afterwards sanctioned it, and they were not wrong. They finally consecrated it as *truth*: there they violated logic, they insulted truth, and discredited their own proper work.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Let me add also that the examination of the pragmatic idea in religion has its well-marked place in James's work on the psychology of religion (cf. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, xviii, pp. 443-445). But to consider the excellence of the moral results of religious pragmatism as a proof of its theological value will never be a sufficient argument from the logical point of view.

## CHAPTER II

### SALVATION FROM PRAGMATIC PHILOSOPHY POSSIBLE BUT NOT PROBABLE

**Final question:** Was it necessary that matters should go so far? Perhaps not. The Latin civilizations had observed the principle of intellectual inequality which separated the social strata. Philosophy remained the appanage of an élite and without much danger. Even in the nineteenth century after the French Revolution, tradition maintained pretty well the distinction between the intellectuals and the people — even in the domain of art. A Victor Hugo, for instance, will counterbalance a Balzac or a Stendhal. Yet to-day the clamor about the superiority of the Anglo-Saxons which is interpreted as meaning the superiority of democracy to intellectual aristocracy will, if it carries the day, force humanity to lay its own head under the axe.

I HOPE I have clearly explained that what has forced the introduction of pragmatism among us is a false conception of individualism, — a conception which has reached its climax in that absurdity, social democracy. For the sake of an ideal, generous withal, though utopian, — that of elevating all men to the dignity of thinking beings, — and which ends by declaring the non-responsible, responsible thinking is not only not forbidden to the masses, not only is permitted to them, but is imposed upon them. The result of this is that, in order to safeguard this fine ideal on the one hand and social order on the other, thinkers have had to confine themselves to a philos-

ophy accessible to the crowd. In other words, in order to allow thought to those who have no business with it, we are obliged to take it from those in whose hands it would not only be harmless, but occasionally very desirable for the sake of the general welfare. In this sense, therefore, James is perhaps not wrong in saying that pragmatism has come to stay, even in philosophy. It is not impossible that the thinker will take into account more and more social needs, that he will not decry pragmatism but will simply hold to peace.

It would be difficult for a philosopher to cease to think; but at least he would abstain henceforth from expressing the result of his meditations.

But was it necessary that things should come to such a pass as this? No, not necessary! At the farthest we might say it was inevitable.

That which men have agreed in modern time to call the Latin civilizations had developed, I have explained why, a social organization in which human rights could be safeguarded and philosophy not be sacrificed. They were in advance of the civilizations of antiquity in that they had recognized the moral equality of men, in the sense in which this can be and ought to be recognized. In principle the church considered the humble, the feeble, the simple-minded as having the same rights in life as the great, the strong, the intelligent, — a doctrine which it expressed by opening the gates of paradise to all indifferently. But, on the other hand, while grant-



ing these moral rights to all, she remained faithful to the great principle of Aristotle, the inequality of men — in fact, to a simple observation of the gifts of nature. Those privileged by nature must have more occasions to develop their talents, hence more freedom, and, in a sense, more rights. But this larger number of rights was only a result of a larger number of duties laid upon the select few. On the part of society that was tantamount to placing responsibilities where in equity they ought to be placed. The church of the middle ages had even favored the formation of classes according to rank of birth; and one must be blinded by our “progressive” modern ideas not to see what there was fundamentally just in this conception, and one must also forget all that science, of which we are so proud, and which assures us in every possible way of the influence of physical and moral heredity, of environment, of education, etc. At the beginning of a society, of course, the strongest acquire nobility not by right of birth, but in virtue of natural superiority; yet afterwards these qualities may be transmitted from parents to children; and, while we admit the possibility of very numerous exceptions, it was but natural that the descendants of those strong men of the early days should be puissant in their turn, and, after numbers of happily arranged marriages, should in the lapse of time form a select class. It was natural again, and not unjust, that those less highly endowed by nature should re-

linquish to the nobles some privileges from the exercise of which all would derive profit. The middle ages, moreover, did not ignore the caprices of heredity, especially in the realm of the intellect; it renewed this intellectual class, as indicated, by circumstances, garnering recruits everywhere, among the poor and the rich, the powerful and the humble, and rearing up all in common in its schools. In a word, the principle of selection was as methodically and as equitably observed as possible. It was a delicate task, but they took account of everything, — the fundamental inequality of men, the facts of heredity, and conditions of environment. They were at all times ready to elevate exceptional men and women from unfavorable, humble conditions of existence; and it is a vain boast to affirm that the world had to wait until the nineteenth century before welcoming superior minds of all classes into the aristocracy of man. Men like Froissart, Amyot, Rabelais, Boileau, Voiture, Voltaire, Rousseau, are there in France to prove the contrary. Think of the court of Margaret of Navarre, of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, of the “salons” of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And if even the noblesse had been absolutely exclusive (it was often so, that was human), it is certainly not *necessarily* so, and the principle would not be injured by its non-observance. Again, if those who tried to be fair to all were frequently baffled by difficulties, at least the sensible idea was there. There is some truth in this

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word of Barbey d'Aurevilly: "The middle ages have not agitated the question of the organization of labor, because they possessed that organization." The masses did not interfere with the *élite* nor the *élite* with the masses; rather they aided each other, the masses doing for the *élite* that which asked only mediocre talents, and the *élite* doing for the masses that which asked a certain superiority. A conception, this, much higher in principle at least, to the indolent method of our day, which consists in not aiding nature in anything, under the pretext of not thwarting her; the result of which is that you have continually to begin again at the beginning in the formation of an *élite*, and that the brain of humanity, if I may so say, is constantly maintained at the level attained at the time when the democratic ideal came into vogue. We who make so great a boast of understanding nature better than the middle ages, we act as if we had not the shadow of a true idea about it. Suppose, please, for a moment that the social organization, such as adopted before the French Revolution, had continued and still existed in our day; and suppose — to return to our special topic — that free thought had reached (as in fact it has) the idea of determinism in nature; it would not have to deny itself and deliver itself over to the acrobatic feats of pragmatism in order to persuade itself that it is mistaken, because these principles are dangerous for the masses; it would have accepted the consequences, and, from the practical

point of view, would have formulated a rule of conduct adapted to these masses, — a rule which would have satisfied the said masses, and, at the same time, have sacrificed in no respect either the dignity of thought or the pragmatic advantages which would have resulted therefrom for all.

All this (an opponent might say) is perhaps very fine in theory, but the experience of the ages is against it. I reply that experience has here no argumentative force whatever. If a physicist does not know how to deal with the law of gravity, does that imply that the law does not exist? If a poet does not succeed in making good verses by the rules of prosody, shall we draw the conclusion that these rules are bad? It remains certain that the system of aristocracy is based upon data of nature which we cannot change, — the inequality of men, for example, — while the system of democracy is in opposition to these same data of nature. That society has not succeeded in adapting its organization to these facts does not abolish the facts; and it is hard to see how, if men have not succeeded with a system basing itself on facts, they will succeed better with a system that ignores them. That under the sway of past aristocracies there were formidable abuses we do not dream of disputing, — sickening, disgusting abuses, arising from the fact that the great and the powerful abused privileges which they could have employed for the benefit of all, but which they employed solely for their own selfish advantage.

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But if there had been a hundred times more abuses, it would still prove, after all, only that the powerful are unscrupulous, or that the measures taken to secure privileges to a true élite were not sufficiently severe, or that the application of the principle is less easy than had been thought, — by no means, however, that the principle is wrong. The way people usually argue on this point is this: "A large number of apples on the tree are decayed; therefore the tree can only produce decayed fruit"; and so the tree was cut down. How childish! The French Revolution was perhaps not wrong in saying that the line of demarcation then existing between the élite and the crowd, and which was the product of historical development, was false — or, rather, falsified (warped from its true course); but it vastly overstepped the conclusions of the premises by assuring men that there was no need of separation, and by replacing aristocracy by democracy. What was needed was, not to reject, but to better interpret, the data of nature and the conception of aristocracy; to deny, perchance, the aristocracy of birth, but to maintain the aristocracy of the intellect, in the broad sense of that word (in politics and commerce as well as in the sciences, the arts, and philosophy). We can perfectly well conceive of the French Revolution reaching an excellent result without terminating in democracy. And I am not sure but that an intellectual aristocracy might not even have emerged, after the shock of the Revolution, from the old

aristocracy; only for that, it would have been necessary for a calmer examination of existing conditions at the end of the eighteenth century to have prevailed. As a matter of fact, the aristocracy of the gown was already an aristocracy of the intellect, which had taken its place beside that of the *ancien régime*, while the noblesse of the sword itself, which for a long time had had no reason-for-being, might perhaps have been transformed. The nobility had the leisure and, consequently, the power to cultivate itself; it was there that the ground was most favorable to bring about an intellectual aristocracy, which might have again more or less corresponded to one of birth. Freedom from harrassing cares about material things, in the case of a well-born person, goes that much towards the development of the superior faculties, and after some generations, this circumstance alone bestows some exquisite refinement that is not acquired in the first generation. Compare the work of Vigny or of Lamartine with that of Hugo or Balzac. In the first two you feel the true aristocracy of mind; in the two latter, there is something strong, perhaps, but unpolished. One may object: "But it is a fact that previous to the nineteenth century the intellectual class has not sprung from the aristocracy; the great names in France, for example, are Rabelais, Corneille, Molière, Voltaire, Rousseau." Very well. And yet we must not forget Montaigne, D'Aubigné, Descartes, Saint-Simon, Mme. de Sévigné, Retz, La

Rochefoucauld, Montesquieu, Buffon, and how many others, less popular only because more refined. And then don't the plebeians owe anything to the nobility? Yes, almost everything. They are indebted to them for a public; and that is something inestimable, for, in order to write, there must be two, — the author and the reader. Compare the literature that aristocratic France has given to the world with that of democratic America, where the two most original authors, Edgar Poe and Walt Whitman, are the very ones that are *taboo*.

But let us resume our argument. In France tradition was strongly entrenched withal, and the triumph of democracy was not immediate; after the Revolution of 1789 there was needed that of 1830, of 1848, of 1871, in the sphere of politics. Again, from the social point of view, with the assistance of Catholic tradition, a kind of equilibrium was established and such utopian geniuses as Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Cabot forced the leaders of the nation to bestow more and more attention upon the masses, without, however, going as far as to place them in power. Finally, in the intellectual sphere, there above all, a tacit agreement had very soon been reached and was long maintained (is even to-day not wholly abandoned) by which it is understood that superior minds shall be left undisturbed in their speculations, and that inferior individuals shall have as guides popular leaders of a pragmatic tendency. There was even established a bourgeois literature,

an art adapted to mediocre understandings, a popular science, etc. A Victor Hugo was the ransom for a Taine or a Renan, an Alexandre Dumas was made good by a Stendhal or a Barbey d'Aurevilly, a Coppée was to be tolerated in exchange for a Leconte de Lisle or a Guyau, a Jules Verne balanced a Claude Bernard or a Berthelot. Clear across the nineteenth century the two currents hold their parallel course. This was very well, and every one was satisfied. The one class was free to develop the faculties that honor man, was free to think; the other received *panem et circenses* in larger and larger amounts, and even (if they desired it) the *semblance* of thought.<sup>1</sup> Nothing hindered men from profiting by all the advantages of material civilization, the discoveries of science, the simplification of life, etc. A society thus organized could go far; it allowed for the natural inequalities among men, thus rendering the passage from one class to another easy; it could satisfy every one; it did not make necessary the pragmatic lie, it did not in any way whatever sacrifice a select class to the inferior part of humanity.

"Then you propose the system of castes?" Yes, why not, if it is in all points preferable to the other? Are we going, because the democratic ideal is perhaps more alluring, — namely, the theory that all men are alike superior in intelligence, — to adopt

<sup>1</sup> Those ideas are further developed in Appendix B, "Literature and the Moral Code."



it forever when it completely ignores reality and has the most disagreeable consequences, condemning the human race to cut its own head? And, indeed, are we not at this point more pragmatic than the pragmatists? The prejudice against certain lines of social demarcation is solely due to a false association of ideas. We are still basing ourselves on that superficial principle of the French Revolution, that a master is necessarily bad and that a servant is necessarily good. Such silly theories as these may answer to the purpose of a Victor Hugo or of demagogues. But certainly nobody would ask proof of the fact that a good master is as much within the natural possibilities of things as a bad servant or slave. The principle of equality was never so frankly, so radically, proclaimed as in the United States, when in the middle of the nineteenth century they emancipated the negro race; and since then the question is which to choose of two solutions of the enormous difficulty created by this regrettable act: whether to get rid of the blacks or reduce them again to slavery (without giving the name "slave" to the thing). Whichever solution is chosen it is a confession of the impossibility of consistent democracy.

I have already alluded to the circumstance that the countries where the democratic principle did not prevail produced, intellectually speaking, superior civilizations. As to moral superiority, we are still waiting to see. This passage from one of the popu-

lar articles of Professor James on pragmatism would be in good place again here: "Democracy is on its trial, and no one knows how it will stand the ordeal. Abounding about us are pessimistic prophets. . . . Who can be absolutely certain that failure may not be the career of democracy? Nothing future is quite secure; states enough have inwardly rotted; and democracy as a whole may undergo self-poisoning. But, on the other hand, democracy is a kind of religion, and we are bound not to admit its failure. . . . Utopias are the noblest exercise of human reason, and no one with a spark of reason in him will sit down fatalistically before the croaker's picture." (*McClure's Magazine*, February, 1908, pp. 420, 421.) Is not this a sort of confession?<sup>1</sup> In fact, is not pragmatism a movement which is looked to to remedy the evils of democracy, — "bossism," commercial dishonesty, the breaking up of family life and indifference to the marriage bond? It would not be very hard to show that the difficulties in which the great pragmatic nation is floundering to-day all come from persistent, wilful, and blind ignorance of the inequalities of men, and from the refusal to bow to any social system which recognizes aristocracy as a fact that cannot with impunity be denied. Instead of submitting to nature, they are positively

<sup>1</sup> Other leaders of the American people have occasionally discussed democracy in these latter years, often less optimistic than James, — Bishop Potter, of New York, for instance. In April, 1908, Bishop Mackay-Smith of Philadelphia created a great excitement by a speech made at an important club of the city in which he exercises his function.

bent on forcing her to submit to us at the very point where we are weakest, or, at any rate, where we are least disposed to act (the artificial selection of the species, physically and morally). What is "bossism"? It is the triumphing of the aristocratic principle, in spite of democracy, which attempts to stop it with its "No admittance." This particular form of it is attended by such disastrous results only because the "boss" is neither recognized by law nor responsible to the law; and so rogues can play the rôle as well as others. What does the commercial dishonesty of the masses mean? It means that mediocre-minded people, in place of believing in a moral and religious consciousness, believe in democracy, — that is to say, every one, whether he is stupid or intelligent, may violate the regulations or the laws, whereas, in fact, only superior minds are above artificial human legislation; regulations are invented for the crowd; if everybody was intelligent enough to behave himself without them, these rules would not exist. What means also this relaxing of the moral life of the family (not specially meaning by that sensuality)? It means that people who are not fit to manage their lives themselves nevertheless arrogate to themselves that right, and disorganize society (without, by the way, attaining more happiness). To put it briefly: it is everywhere regarded as very natural to-day to bestow upon the *crowd* those privileges of which the *aristocracy* of former times was accused of not knowing how to make good use.

And, finally, what shall be said of the problem of corporations or trusts in democracies? Nowhere more than in this matter are the contradictions of our present social faith more glaring. We have seen a man of good intentions, at the head of his great people, all astray in pitiable and inextricable difficulties; by nature he would have been a believer in aristocratic individualism, and would have fought for the freedom of action of the great financial leaders of his country; but as a servant of the people who believed himself convinced of the superiority of democracy, he waged war against those financiers to the utmost of his power; the lack of a rational basis of action has rendered him a fanatic in this matter (it has always done so everywhere); he moves in a vicious circle, like all his people.

The key to the problem lay in the adoption of the principle of the natural inequality of men. The great ought not to be subjected to the same laws as the small; they must be given privileges instead of having such taken away from them — and that for the good of all. We could share in the honor of forming great men by standing up for them; we prefer to form criminals by laying down everywhere laws which these select natures *must* violate if they wish to give the full measure of their superiority, if they wish to remain the exceptional beings that nature has made them. Our society is responsible for the so-called crookedness of characters like Rockefeller and Harriman, as it was responsible for the cruelty toward the galley slave, Jean Valjean.

A certain young American economist (Ghent), who is also a socialist, has opened his eyes, and has reached the conclusion that democracy, in order to escape its contradictions, must come to establish something that he characterizes by a phrase which is a definition of his theory, — *benevolent feudalism*. Apart from the details of the concrete social organization which he proposes, the principle is eminently just: to separate the classes, to permit the élite to assert themselves, only insisting that they feel their responsibilities; to put in place of the purely authoritative feudalism of the middle ages a more enlightened feudalism, more humanitarian; to do this is to recognize the rights of superiority and to make the serfs themselves happier. But Ghent was not listened to any more than was Mallock, author of a work replete with sound and just ideas, *Aristocracy and Evolution*. The people preferred democracy, and were obliged to fall back on pragmatism.

## CHAPTER III

### IS WILLIAM JAMES A PRAGMATIST?

The coexistence in William James of pragmatic thought and pure thought. Two reasons have finally made the balance incline to the side of pragmatism: 1. social environment; 2. academic environment. William James reacts against a pseudo-pragmatism, opposing a higher pragmatism to a lower pragmatism. The system of two truths.

THIS question may seem impertinent; yet it is not irrelevant.

I have felt obliged to attack the ideas of a man whom I deem to be one of the most awake thinkers of our epoch; but in arguing against him as the most brilliant representative of pragmatism, I have more than once asked myself whether James really belongs to that class of philosophers whose flag he flies. Let me attempt to handle this little psychological problem — necessarily involving some personal remarks — without infringing the laws of good breeding.

William James is the son of Henry James, who attached himself first to the Presbyterian faith, and afterwards, on becoming a Swedenborgian, wrote *Society the Redeemed Form of Man*; he is the author of this saying which contains virtually the whole of pragmatism: "The true is worthy of rev-

erence only so far as it is in the service of the good" (cited by Bargy: *La religion dans la Société aux États-Unis*, p. 146).

So we are to think of William James as reared in a graciously austere and mildly mystical New England atmosphere. But later, as a young man, he took up the study of the exact sciences, — undoubtedly becoming much interested in them for he took the degree of doctor of medicine; and later began by teaching anatomy. But a conflict was not long in breaking forth between his mystical tendencies and his scientific tendencies. It is interesting to note that a part of James's professional preparation was made in Geneva, where, while studying anatomy, physiology, and geology, he lived in that atmosphere of ingrained Protestantism which, without being as sour as people sometimes please themselves in thinking it to be, knows how to win everybody over to moral, or pragmatic, preoccupations; it is the same *milieu* out of which issued Jean Jacques Rousseau. When he returned to America, Professor James, as I have just said, taught the natural sciences; then he instructed in psychology, which brought him into close relations with philosophy. After a term of years he published his great work, *The Principles of Psychology*, which reveals, side by side with a very sincere love of objective science, deep-running moral and teleological predilections. It is easy to see that Mr. James avoids giving his judgment for a mechanical conception of

life, though deep down this must be his idea. Maril-lier, in the last of the studies he made of the work, in the *Revue Philosophique* (February, 1893), well said: "The teleological character of the system is at first very striking, and one must penetrate beyond the literal sense of the phrases to perceive that very frequently he means some kind of mechanical selection in nature rather than an intentional choice. William James never flatly affirms that anywhere, perhaps because he has not decided in favor of one of the two conceptions but oscillates constantly between them without distinctly acknowledging it" (p. 182).

Professor James could not remain always in this equivocal position. The very loyalty and generosity of his fine nature were opposed to it. In the essays and volumes penned by him after the *Psychology*, his teleological predilections kept augmenting up to the time when he decided to make pragmatic ideas a part of his intellectual capital. Two paramount influences seem to me to have been at work, apart from what I might call personal predispositions.

First, the pragmatic atmosphere of America, which I have talked about sufficiently in the preceding pages to make it unnecessary for me to recur to the subject here. Nobody can entirely free himself from the influence of the environment in which he lives, and William James is morally too human, and intellectually too penetrating, not to comprehend the worth of pragmatism in the life of a nation such as the people of the United States form, and not to



approve it and even endeavor to help to establish it on a solid basis. (Let me observe, by the way, that the brother of William, the novelist Henry James, who has entirely given up living in America, has become a pure intellectualist, and is even more such in his latest novels than in his earliest.)

But a second influence operated in an entirely different way. It is less apparent, but I believe it to be a real one and very important: I mean a sort of pseudo-philosophy, nay, even pseudo-pragmatism, invading on this side and on that the domain of thought, and against which James felt the necessity of a reaction. Let me explain: In the natural sciences America conducts researches as disinterested and as objective as any country whatever; and one may indeed say that this is so as long as the relations between science and practical life are quite loose. But when these relations become closer it is different. Two classes of investigators are then formed:

1. Those who take their stand resolutely upon practical ground, without caring whether or not the philosophical verities at the base of their practical theories are valid from the point of view of pure reason. These are the political economists.

2. Those who insist upon basing the social and moral organization of life on philosophical principles, and who therefore can never be confronted with any philosophical theory without at once weighing its practical conclusions.

As respects the class of disinterested philosophers,

it is extremely restricted in number, that is to say, of those who, while they know very well that there are relations between scientific or philosophic truths and life, yet study the former without any preoccupation as to their practical application, just as, for instance, an astronomer might study the stars, or a biologist the phenomena of physiological regeneration, or a mathematician space of four dimensions. In general, we may say that in the wake of the diffusion of instruction in our modern democracies has followed the further idea that all the instruction we receive ought to serve as a practical guide in our active life; the idea that philosophic speculations and the higher mathematics, not to speak of Greek and Latin and the humanities, shall help men to better success in the conduct of life, — just as a knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic prepares an economic person not to be deceived by a dishonest merchant. Now it is not only a mark of superficiality to believe innocently in the possibility of applying any and every scientific and philosophic truth to life; nay, it involves a positive danger. In fact, it is fanaticism, with all its attendant evils, its cruelties and its stupidities; for, precisely, fanaticism consists in blindly applying a principle without considering the circumstances which either impose restrictions upon it or render every application of it mischievous. Science laid under contribution in this way is a social plague. And this plague rages fiercely in the country of William James. Let no

one object that I am contradicting myself because I showed above that the people were pragmatic. I simply note the fact that side by side with the masses, and beneath a small and select class of true scholars and scientists, there is a numerous class of pseudo-savants, controlled by certain university men, and especially composed of teachers. These persons, at the time of the great scientific awakening in the United States, some twenty years ago, in order that they might take a hand in the sport, temporarily abandoned their posts to go and drink of the poisoned spring, setting their wits to work to apply, all athwart and counter, the new philosophic and scientific ideas; and, finding the masses still less prepared than they to assimilate these ideas, they too frequently succeeded, in their misguided enthusiasm, in putting preposterous principles into circulation. For reasons easily comprehended, psychology lent itself to this form of exploitation more than any other science; and its speedy application to ethics, and still more to pedagogy, produced ridiculous results, sometimes positively disastrous in unskillful hands, even if it had only been, as President Butler of Columbia University once very correctly observed, the frittering away of the youthful days of innumerable children, subjected in the name of "science" (innocent victims of this fatal zeal) to ever new methods of education. Nothing is better adapted to prevent the germination of the seed sown in the mind and to put the brains of young people

into irremediable confusion; a single mediocre method of instruction systematically carried out would produce infinitely better fruit than a thousand excellent methods (and how many of these methods are excellent?) tried on, one after the other. Through this disconcerting mingle-mangle of science and practical predilections, education tinkers finally attained to inconceivable puerilities.<sup>1</sup> The thing was carried to such a pitch that superb psychological laboratories in which many believed they saw the "open sesame" of the millenium have today a reputation not always merited of charlatanry. I remember hearing some years ago Professor Münsterberg, the director of the psychological laboratory at Harvard, make a determined attack, in the presence of an academic audience, upon experimental psychology as it is popularly conceived.

Now William James, as the author of the comprehensive work which best sums up the aspirations of our modern psychology, was better situated than any one else to realize the shallowness of all these crudities and puerilities, and he frequently made use of pragmatism to protest against them. It may be said that one of the objects of James was to offset a narrow, low pragmatism by an intelligent, lofty pragmatism. Of course (he would say to the pseudo-philosophers) we must take cognizance of the consequences of a theory in practical life; but

<sup>1</sup> In all this it will be easily understood why the author does not wish to quote names.

still we must be quite sure that the speculative conclusions we may reach have enough importance in themselves to be worth the trouble of making systematic applications of them to the concrete life. Moreover, you make observations for the most part in some isolated department of thought, and then, as if the salvation of the world depended on it, you will overturn everything for the pleasure of making use of your little truth. If you will take hold of philosophy on its practical side, then applications *are* more important than the principles or natural laws you formulate; then, indeed, we must *create* social principles, as political economists are already seeking to propound them, and, as far as that is concerned, the politicians, and even the priests. But it is only your ignorance that makes you so bold as to want to reach that goal *by the road of philosophy*; you will always be baffled by the reality. You set up to be little Gods; but in reality you are the very counterpart of children who wrap a stick of wood in a rag and believe they have made a baby, or you are like little boys bestriding gravely their broomstick horse. You are pragmatic, but in an abominable way; you are going counter to the very end you propose to yourself. An understanding great and acute enough to follow up by conscientious analysis, even to its minutest details, the formidable mix of causes and effects in nature would be superhuman. Certain grand geniuses appear at irregular intervals, — monsters of genius, in truth, — who are

endowed with extraordinary powers of divination that unconsciously guide them; and even the greatest have never accounted for more than the merest fraction of the motives that impel them to act. Of course, every sensation, every thought, every action, is *per se* analyzable by psychology, but as a matter of fact never will be analyzed by minds as limited as ours, or analyzed in such a way that the analysis shall be for us of a pragmatic value. Let us ponder these words of Auguste Comte in the second lecture of his *Cours de philosophie positive*: "It is evident that, having conceived in a general way of the study of nature as serving as a rational basis for action upon nature, the human mind ought to go on in theoretic researches, in doing away wholly with any kind of practical consideration; for our means of discovering truth are so imperfect that if we do not concentrate them exclusively upon this object, and if, in our search for the truth, we impose upon ourselves the extraneous condition of finding in it an immediate practical utility, it would be almost impossible for us to attain to it."<sup>1</sup> And *vice versa*, let us cease to burden with scientific, philosophical, or psychological analyses the creative genius of the artist, for example, or even in a more modest sphere, the practical good sense which guides us in real life. Philosophy frequently leads us astray because we

<sup>1</sup> Compare with this sentence in William James's recent *Pluralistic Universe*: "Philosophy should seek this kind of living [intuitional] understanding of the movement of reality, not follow science in vainly patching together fragments of its dead results" (p. 264).

have at command only *our own* philosophy, which is always limited. Now if we wish really to create pragmatic philosophy, we must be more radical; we must be practical *above all*. — In such a way as this William James has opposed to the bourgeois pragmatism of the pygmy scientists around him a pragmatism wiser and profounder, and one conscious of its ignorance; and I should like to draw a very clean and sharp line of demarcation between it and the pragmatism of his followers in philosophy, Messrs. Schiller, for instance, or Papini. He is pragmatic in the superior sense of the word, not in the sense accepted by the majority, whether adherents or not of pragmatism. It is to draw attention to this fundamental difference that I have entitled this chapter "Is James a Pragmatist?" He *radically* separates theory and practice. For instance, his attitude toward occultism ("metapsychics" as Richet has termed it) seems to me extremely correct.<sup>1</sup> Even should you prove to me a hundred times that a phenomenon of hallucination or of telepathy is theoretically explicable by auto-suggestion or by some other natural reason, you would still not have proved anything, for you have not proved that your explanation is the true one. "There is more in heaven and earth, Horatio, than is dreamed of in your philosophy." There are a thousand ways of theoretically

<sup>1</sup> Even though, as I have said, this attitude seems to me to have been suggested to him by his desire to prove immortality and the religious doctrines which gravitate around it.

accounting for any phenomenon. Even a phenomenon as simple as the fall of a stone may have many different causes. It may be detached from a cliff, proceed from the explosion of a mine or a volcano, or tumble from a roof; it may have been thrown into the air by a child or what not; it may even fall from the sky. You may sometimes think you have the true explanation, when really you only have one of several *possible* explanations. Remember the story of the negro Rahan and the apple in *The Arabian Nights*; it is a veritable apologue. And the more complex the phenomena become, the more possible become the errors. Now science, after all, hardly goes deeper than the possible explanation. "Science," says James, in his *Will to Believe*, "has organized her mental processes into a regular technique, her so-called method of verification; and she has fallen so deeply in love with the method that one may even say she has ceased to care for truth by itself at all. It is only truth that is technically verified that interests her. The truth of truths might come in merely affirmative form, and she would decline to touch it" (p. 21). Elsewhere William James expresses his personal opinion in these words: "The negative, the alogical, is never wholly banished. Something — call it fate, chance, freedom, spontaneity, the devil, what you will — is still wrong and other and outside and unincorporated, from *your* point of view, even though you be the greatest of philosophers" (p. viii).



Let me cite also the last words of *Varieties of Religious Experience*:

"The total expression of human experience, as I view it objectively, invincibly urges me beyond the narrow 'scientific' bounds. Assuredly the real world is of a different temperament,—more intricately built than physical science allows. So my objective and my subjective conscience both hold me to the over-belief which I express. Who knows whether the faithfulness of individuals here below to their own poor over-beliefs may not actually help God in turn to be more effectively faithful to his own greater tasks?"

In the last phrase, as in all the theological opinions of the book from which I have taken this citation, Mr. James has gone beyond his premises, and on that ground he could no more succeed than those who became pragmatists from mere pettiness of mind.<sup>1</sup> But the groundwork of his thought, the meaning—conscious or unconscious—of his pragmatic writing, after all is said, is this: to ask for what I have myself also called for,—the separation of science or philosophy from life; the difference between us being solely that, while he fears to see life absorbed by philosophy, I fear, should he succeed, to see philosophy absorbed by life. For, in order to attain his ends, William James has yielded precisely to

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Hébert notes also in James as a pragmatist that trace of faltering I had called attention to in his *Psychology*. "He (James), after he has demolished everything, excels in reconstructing all by unexpected *over-beliefs*." (*Le Pragmatisme*, p. 97.)

that temptation to confront the absorption of life by philosophy with the absorption of philosophy by life.

As to myself, I propose a compromise. My reason cannot abdicate her throne, nor can I agree to give up philosophy for the sake of life. Besides, since it would be in the name of reason that I should condemn the value of reason, what would this condemnation be worth? We cannot get away from our own shadow. On the other hand, since it is dangerous to allow life to be absorbed by philosophy, dangerous from the social point of view, I propose to adopt for practical reasons the systems of two truths, — a philosophic truth, independent of consequences, and a pragmatic truth, which shall be our social philosophy of the people, for the benefit of society. William James, in order not to break completely with philosophy, and to preserve at one and the same time certain incontestable scientific data *and* pragmatism, has been forced to formulate his *philosophic* creed as pluralism: I propose a “dualism” for *practical* reasons. For there cannot be contradiction in truth (as pluralism impliedly admits), but nothing hinders us from acting *as if* there were two truths. To frankly recognize that humanity is right in basing its ethics on false principles would only be base if *we* were responsible for the fact that truth is mischievous and the lie advantageous. What has always distinguished the true philosopher is moderation, — which, however, must not be confounded with cowardice.

But once more, pragmatism, as a *philosophic* method and as a *philosophic* system, only begins when you cease to make a distinction between philosophy and life (or, if you will, ethics), and it seems clear to me that it is this distinction which is with William James the important thing. I am certain that he would defend this portion of his doctrines to the last ditch; I am not so certain that he would very vigorously insist on defending this quite different idea, that pragmatism is philosophic truth. In the chapter he has devoted to the definition of truth, the phrase "absolute truth" occurs several times. It does not much matter just what he means by this; but it must be something else than *pragmatic* truth.

## CONCLUSION

IN order that his readers may more easily grasp the real meaning of his work, an author sometimes feels the need of summing up its central idea in a preface. It has been done here. I therefore esteem it to be superfluous to add a special conclusion; but I shall take the liberty of begging the conscientious reader to re-read the few pages at the beginning of this volume, and of which he will now be better able to grasp the whole meaning.

Yet if I were asked to sum up in a sentence the thesis I have tried to defend it would be this:

I am in perfect sympathy with the social work which pragmatism proposes to itself, which is, in short, to render humanity as happy as possible. But I do not believe that the means adopted — the bending of philosophy to its needs and developing the spirit of democracy as it is conceived to-day — are the only possible ones, or even the best. Above all, I do not believe they are the most worthy means, for they rest on a double philosophic error, — the agreement of scientific truth with human aspirations, and the intellectual and social equality of individuals.

## APPENDIX A

### ANSWERS TO SOME CRITICISMS

*"One must play the game of philosophy with the cards all on the table."* — J. E. CREIGHTON.

The Argument of Silence. Mr. Schiller's Criticism. Pragmatic Method and Pragmatic Theories. Intellectual Aristocracy and the Masses. Science and Morality. Anti-Pragmatism and Hyper-Pragmatism.

THE ARGUMENT OF SILENCE. — Although the least convincing, it is much in favor among pragmatists; and this is why I feel called to discuss it here before any other. Pragmatists will acknowledge receipt of criticisms, but they usually make one of the three following answers, or all three together: I. *You fail entirely to understand us*, or II. *Your argument shows that you fail to appreciate the real issue*, or III. *You ascribe to us theories which we never expressed, nor cared to express*. This seems to settle the case for them;<sup>1</sup> it does not for others.

<sup>1</sup> Under the title *Discussion*, Professor Moore writes an article on *Anti-Pragmatism* which contains these words: "Into the issue itself we cannot go;" and Professor Dewey, who thinks nothing good whatsoever of the volume under discussion, is careful in his account of it not to seize the occasion to explain in what he was so thoroughly misunderstood; for, when he comes to speak of the chapter concerning him especially, he remarks: "A becoming modesty forbids my dealing with it." This we may take as profound irony . . . but then it may be asked why Professor Dewey took the trouble of writing an

I. Suppose for one moment that their claim be true and that really nobody understands pragmatism:—then, whose fault is it? It seems to me that so far philosophers have succeeded in making themselves understood by their fellow students; else they did their opponents the honor of telling *where* the misunderstanding was.

Or is pragmatism so terribly deep that only the few elect can live up to it?—Why then take the trouble of spreading it abroad, writing books, giving popular lectures about it? If it is not so extremely profound, and pragmatists will agree that others might penetrate the arcana of the new philosophy, then I can see only one reason for not opposing arguments to objections, namely, the difficulty in offering any.

II. With regard to the second claim that opponents of pragmatists do not appreciate the point at issue, the following remarks will not be out of place:

1. Besides minor objections, there is one that was made to pragmatists over and over again, in all sorts of forms, namely, that they substitute for the one great philosophical problem of organic, logical, continuous truth, a quantity of unconnected problems; or that they substitute for the epistemological problem of truth a moral, if not utilitarianist, conception of truth; or again that they replace objective truth by subjective truth;—they are all one and the same accusation—why not use William James's frank expression, and say, *with him*, that pragmatists are trying to substitute

account of the wretched book unless it be that he was afraid lest others should think differently in reading it. Personally, I much prefer the attitude of Professor James who declined to discuss publicly *Anti-Pragmatism*.

a *multiverse* for a *universe*? I have added to the text of this edition a long note to the central passage of my own criticism (where I point out the confusion between what I called the "scientific pragmatism" and the "moral pragmatism"), quoting from two of the foremost critics of pragmatism in America: Messrs. Hibben and Creighton. Professor Creighton adds to the passage reproduced a few lines (which I like to reproduce now) to the effect that "it is somewhat remarkable that those who uphold the teleological or instrumental view of knowledge have as yet devoted almost no attention to answering the serious and legitimate objections that have been strongly urged against their position from many sides" (*Philosophical Review*, Vol. XIII, pp. 294, 295); and several names are given, among them Professor Seth's (who, by the way, has renewed the charges in a review of William James's *Pluralistic Universe* (*Philosophical Review*, September, 1909). This was in 1904, and in January, 1909, Dr. Carus could still write in *Monist*, "It is strange that all his critics agree in misunderstanding Professor James's conception of truth" (pp. 85, 86).

2. In discussing *Anti-Pragmatism* all the reviewers that offered more than a few lines' account have very well agreed on this central passage (distinction between "scientific" pragmatism and "moral" pragmatism); even those who would strongly differ from the author's personal ideas would still admit that the case there was good (e. g., A. Naviller, in *Semaine Littéraire*, Émile Faguet, in *Idées Modernes*, the anonymous reviewer in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As we go to press, the article of M. G. Compayré, ex-rector of the University of Lyon and professor of philosophy, comes in; referring

3. We were three in France who wrote up pragmatism at the same time, and not knowing anything of each other, we all three pointed out the necessity for this distinction sometimes in remarkably similar terms; see *Anti-Pragmatism*, pp. 26-37; Chantecor, *L'Année psychologique*, 1908, *Le Pragmatisme*, pp. 377, 378, especially; and A. Rey, *La philosophie moderne* (Flammarion, 1908), pp. 70, 71, 75-79, 137, 138, 330, 331.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, as the same objection is brought against pragmatists from all quarters, may it not pertinently be asked whether *they* are not perhaps the ones who fail or refuse to appreciate the point at issue?

III. Not much need be said regarding the third justification offered by pragmatists who use the argument of silence, namely, that ideas are ascribed to them, the paternity of which they refuse to endorse. Their attitude here is almost naïve in thus quietly refusing to consider disturbing consequences implied in their premises and denying us the right to answer: "No, you did not say so explicitly, of course; but you cannot *not* say it if you say such other thing."

While I was correcting the proofs of this chapter, I received the new book by Professor James, *The Meaning of Truth*. I am sorry to find that he cultivates

to the claim of Poincaré by the pragmatists: "M. Schinz en démontre avec force la fausseté" (*La Revue*, Sept. 15, 1909).

<sup>1</sup> Rey shows, on pp. 75-79 among others, the important distinction that exists between Poincaré's theories and those of pragmatism; and this suggests an interesting remark, namely, that William James seems to have by himself given up his claims on Poincaré and replaced him almost entirely by Bergson in *Pluralistic Universe*. This is much better. Indeed, the clever and delusive books of Bergson remind one very much of James's way of apprehending problems.



there the argument of silence on a great scale. Among the critics he does not "pretend to consider" even the names of such men "as Messrs. Taylor, Lovejoy, Gardiner, Bakewell, Creighton, Hibben, Parodi, Salter, Carus, Lalande, Mentrè, McTaggart, G. E. Moore and others, especially not Professor Schinz, who has published under the title *Anti-Pragmatisme* an amusing sociological romance." (I am glad to have contributed to Professor James's merriment, and I am sure, of course, that a colleague — whose name was just barely mentioned in the above list, and who is evidently jealous of the large space allotted to me — was wrong when he commented on my "special" mention: "You must have hit him.") The opponents after Professor James's heart are men like Mr. J. B. Pratt, "for . . . [Mr. Pratt] . . . admits all *my* essential contentions" (p. 169).

Why does Professor James not consider the criticism of men, among whom appear almost all the leading philosophers of America? Two reasons are given: (1) "These critics seem to labor under an inability almost pathetic to understand the thesis which they seek to refute." Their case may be "pathetic"; but at the same time it is strange that, with the mastery of English style possessed by Professor James, he should not be able to formulate pragmatism so that other intellects can understand it and accept it. May it not be, after all, that something is wrong with pragmatism?

(2) The other reason is that Professor James does not wish to add "more repetition to the fearful amount that is already there." — Well, yes! that is just the trouble, "the fearful amount of repetition." When

pragmatists repeat the same things all the time, how can they expect that a simple change in the way of dressing their ideas will make any impression upon serious critics? Would it not be better to meet the criticism addressed to them from all quarters, which is summarized in these words: Pragmatism is Subjectivism?

In short, the argument of silence will not do — no more than that of irony, by the way. Pragmatists can surely not complain that philosophers have not endeavored conscientiously to understand them. We may have all failed, but then, if pragmatists insist upon not telling us at last what pragmatism is, of course we will never know; — if *they* will not tell, who will?

MR. SCHILLER'S CRITICISM. — The above remarks do not apply to Mr. Schiller, who, on the contrary, has proved, as far as the author is concerned, a loyal opponent in spite of his amusing bluntness. He has taken up the discussion and frankly met our criticisms. He deserves credit for it not only because his attitude is more normal, but also because he so fearlessly commits pragmatism to irrationalism, and thus renders things much easier. I quoted his sentence: "If one had to choose between Irrationalism and Intellectualism, there would be no doubt that the former would have to be preferred." (*Humanism*, p. 6.) He tries to get out of the difficulty now by saying that the sentence was meant as a "sarcasm." (*Mind*, July, 1909, p. 420.) Very well; but then the case appears to me thus: Either Mr. Schiller maintains his statement seriously, or he does not. If he does, then he condemns the logical character of pragmatism — that is what I accuse him of. If he does not maintain it, then once

more I ask: In what does pragmatism differ from any other philosophy which conforms to the rules of logic?<sup>1</sup>

Here are the words by which Mr. Schiller defends himself: "Surely prudence as well as candor should have urged Mr. Schinz to read a few lines further. I own that Pragmatism vindicates the rationality of Irrationalism, *without becoming itself irrational*; it restrains the extravagance of Intellectualism, *without losing faith in the intellect*." Will the reader kindly weigh these words: "Pragmatism vindicates the rationality of Irrationalism without becoming itself irrational"; let us be "candid" about it; can they mean anything else but: "the rationality of being irrational, without being irrational"? I do not see it; words have a meaning, I suppose. But is not this taxing our "candor" rather high!<sup>2</sup>

As to the second part of the phrase, it adds nothing to the point in question: "Pragmatism restrains the extravagance of Intellectualism without losing faith in the intellect." Did ever an intellectualist make it a point to advocate extravagances of the intellect? I am not aware of it; and even if some did, intellectualism

<sup>1</sup> Let me take this opportunity to point out the vagueness of Mr. Schiller's method. Here is another case parallel to the one just quoted: In *Studies in Humanism*, p. 360, "What right have we to assume that even 'ultimate' truth must be one and the same for all? The assumption is no doubt convenient, and in a rough and ready way it works. . . ." Is that meant as "sarcasm" also? At any rate, we should like to know, does it or does it not work?

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Schiller's words are echoed by William James, who in *Pluralistic Universe* asks us to "think in non-conceptualized terms" (1) (p. 290). And even by Professor Dewey who, in his criticism of *Anti-Pragmatism* suggests that there might be "a pragmatic interpretation of the principle of contradiction." (*Philosophical Review*, July, 1909, p. 447.) Indeed, that would be interesting!

ought not to be condemned for that man's extravagance. *Without losing faith in the intellect* — why, then, if one adopts the requirements of the intellect, part company with intellectualism? Always and ever we are brought back to the dilemma on which rests my whole criticism: Pragmatism can be different from philosophy as understood up to this day, *i. e.*, rational or intellectual philosophy, *only by being irrational*; Pragmatism has to be irrational or not be at all. This is positively implied in the premises of their affirmations. Mr. Schiller wants to "reform logic" (*loc. cit.* p. 426); but nobody can "reform" logic; we find logic in us, we do not make it. Aristotle himself would never claim that he invented logic. . . . I am sure I run very little risk in predicting that Mr. Schiller in his future book may possibly violate logic, but he surely can never "reform" it. The "psychological pragmatism" he refers to in his criticism, and which would serve as a link between what I called "scientific" and "moral" pragmatism, will be of no avail; it can simply juxtapose both; it can ignore their incompatibility, but it will never do away with it.

By the way, regarding this question of the irrationalism of pragmatism, Prof. Wm. James is as outspoken in his last volume as we may desire: "For my own part I have finally found myself compelled to give up logic fairly, equally, and irrevocably . . ." or again, "So, I prefer bluntly to call it, if not irrational, then at least non-rational in its constitution." (*Pluralistic Universe*, pp. 212, 213.) I isolate, of course, those passages from all sorts of reservations made with a view to make us swallow the real pragmatic pills; a good deal would be gained, for instance, if pragmatists

would tell us once what difference they make between irrational and non-rational; because "candid" people do not see any, at least when the words are used in such a context.<sup>1</sup> See now how less openly M. Schiller says the same thing: "Reason may of course enter into the rational act [the *may* is pretty!], *but it is by no means indispensable* [!!!], and even when it does occur [are we not glad to hear that it occasionally *does* occur that "reason enters into the rational act"?] it only forms a small part of the total process."<sup>2</sup> (*Studies in Humanism*, p. 355.) Between the two ways, the "direct" way of William James is still preferable.

Another criticism of Mr. Schiller is to the effect that there are pragmatic writings which I do not quote and which undoubtedly I have not read. I plead guilty; there are many pragmatic writings which I did not take the trouble of looking up. But I maintain that it was not necessary. When one has found pragmatists using ten, fifteen, twenty times the same deceiving argument in trying to throw logic, what is the use of keeping up reading? There comes a time when an investigator can feel satisfied that no new argument can possibly be offered. This I felt decidedly before sitting down and writing *Anti-Pragmatism* — and I have seen no new argument coming up in the discussion of the book either; not even in Mr. Schiller's criticism in *Mind*.

<sup>1</sup> Here again I have an opportunity to refer to the authority of Professor Seth. See the latter's criticism of a passage of William James's *Pluralistic Universe*, similar to those of Schiller discussed here in *Philosophical Review*, September, 1909, the last page.

<sup>2</sup> Italics are mine.

Finally, my contention that there is a connection which was well worth indicating between pragmatism and modern conditions of social life (not especially the American national character) is not accepted by Mr. Schiller. But he bases his objection on the fact that *philosophers* are opposed to pragmatism as a rule; now, I say that pragmatism would be a philosophy well adapted for the *people* of our generation. Thinkers will some day realize that a philosophy may be excellent socially, although not true in itself. I distinguish very sharply — altogether too sharply in the eyes of most of my critics — between pragmatism and pragmatic philosophy; Mr. Schiller does not give me credit for it.

PRAGMATIC METHOD AND PRAGMATIC THEORIES. — There is something so disconcerting in the claims of pragmatism that probably many may still feel like Mr. Bertaud, who says in the *International Journal of Ethics*, in his criticism of *Anti-Pragmatisme* (April, 1909, p. 396): "One point remains obscure, however, in all that: the relation of the pragmatic method to the pragmatic theories obtained by the method. Schinz seems to consider them inseparable. James has objected to it. And, in fact, we can conceive very well of a man using the pragmatic method and being an atheist; if in his eyes society might be better organized on atheistic than on religious principles, he could hold this view and still be a pragmatist."

The answer to the query is made by Mr. Bertaud himself; in the last words of the above lines he emphasizes my very criticism and that of most opponents of pragmatism, namely, that the new "method" by itself leads nowhere (or everywhere — the result is

the same); and this is the very reason why pragmatism is of no avail: it leads the one to theism, the other to atheism, and in both cases the decision is true to the pragmatic criterion of usefulness.

As a matter of fact, the answer does not depend on the pragmatic method at all, but rather on the solution of another preliminary question, in this case: "Which society is preferable, the theistic one or the atheistic one?" According to what you think about it personally you then choose the one or the other reply; but the pragmatic element comes in too late to offer the determining factor in the decision and to be of avail.<sup>1</sup>

But, on the other hand, it so happens by a mere accident that William James and his followers are religiously inclined; and therefore as they have decided for themselves that theism was better for man than atheism, they were bound, in applying the pragmatic method, to decide that theism was true; there was a necessary relation between the method and the theory.

One might express this very well by a short formula: pragmatic philosophy distinguishes itself from intellectualistic philosophy by substituting personal rationalism for impersonal rationalism.

To sum up: there is not in itself any organic connection between pragmatism and religion; William James has a right to claim that. But, the opinions of a man being such or such, a specific connection becomes imperative. Now, as one of the chief purposes of *Anti-Pragmatism* was to show that the pragmatic method was the (conscious or unconscious) result, on the part

<sup>1</sup> This was shown very well by Professor Pratt, *What is Pragmatism*, Lecture V.

of the representatives of pragmatism, of a desire to uphold certain ethical and religious views desirable for society, I had a right to, and I did, emphasize this connection between pragmatism and theism.

INTELLECTUAL ARISTOCRACY AND THE MASSES. — I come now to the discussion of criticism, directed against my own ideas.

In reading of the distinction I have established between the pragmatic problem (a social problem) and a pragmatic philosophy, several no doubt have been inclined to interpret my theories as does Professor Moore in the *Journal of Philosophy* (May 27, 1909, p. 291). "The thinking class as such is a law unto itself. It needs render no account to the others (the masses). But the others must render an account to the thinkers. For the thinker finds it no less difficult to live by thought alone than by bread alone. . . ." Professor Moore does not quote my words, but evidently that is, according to him, the way I ought to think with my theories. I am not afraid to accept the consequences implied in my premises; still one may question here whether really such things are implied. I say no. Certainly it is my opinion that the aristocracy of the intellect (which does not necessarily imply all philosophers) ought to lead; and, furthermore, I do believe that this aristocracy "need render no account to the people"; for, when one consents to render account to some one, this implies a belief in the superiority of the judger; now, for the aristocracy of the mind to take the masses as judges would be both foolish and unwise. *But* this does not mean that aristocracy ought not to take the masses into account; on the contrary,



*noblesse oblige*. I maintain, for instance, that parents "need not render account" to their children, but I do not mean to say that parents need not act in taking their children into consideration, — and not on account of fear but possibly on account of love. Concerning the social problem before us, my point of view is just opposed to that ascribed to me by Professor Moore, not a little loftier than he probably expects, and at the same time in perfect logical agreement with all my other ideas. In two words it is this: *Masses have rights and no duties, aristocracy has duties besides rights*. — I use the word "duties" for lack of a better; it would lead me too far to go into more detailed explanation here.

One of my critics has understood that part of Anti-Pragmatism very well; it may not be out of place to oppose his interpretation of my ideas to those of Professor Moore: "Science rests entirely on the idea of determinism of phenomena, which of course is bound to kill energy and all sense of responsibility in the people. Now society is, after all, more important than scientific truth. Therefore, let us choose society with untruth rather than truth with anarchy. The reason why Schinz calls his book *Anti-Pragmatisme* is therefore not because he objects to a pragmatic philosophy; the masses need it on the contrary. He only objects to having this philosophy called *true* philosophy. He deplores that we should be forced to keep truth from the people, but sees in it a necessary result of modern conditions or more plainly of democracy. . . . There is, he says, an automatic law to the effect that the more democratic we become, the more it will be necessary

to conceal truth from the people; the freer people become, the less free philosophy will be." (Bertaud, in *Intern. Journal of Ethics*, April, 1909, pp. 395, 396.<sup>1</sup>)

SCIENCE AND MORALITY. — One of my critics, Professor A. Naville, of Geneva (Switzerland), has raised a very interesting problem (*Semaine Littéraire*, March 6, 1909), namely: If the vulgarization of science, with its basis of determinism, is harmful to the morality of the masses, killing energy and resistance to lower instincts, this same argument ought to hold also for the representatives of intellectual aristocracy; because, after all, no matter how intelligent or well educated a man may be, he remains human.

I was well aware of the question in writing, but I had several reasons for not going into a discussion; chiefly this one: The fact that the objection could be raised on moral grounds, and that, naturally, educated or able people would not escape the consequences if they became conscious of the determinism of phenomena, will not render determinism less true.

In as far, however, as the question is raised, I will say a word regarding it. The suggestion of Professor Naville is: Ought we not, accepting Mr. Schinz's theories, to stop science altogether, if, anyway, studying would be, to say the least, of no good consequences?

To give an answer, one ought first to solve this other question: Is morality an end by itself in life, or is it only a means to reach some other goal? If it is an end by itself, then of course science would better be left alone. But if morality is only a means to render

<sup>1</sup> I have answered Professor Moore's article more fully in *Journal of Philosophy*, August 5, 1909.

possible social life, and social life itself has an end, e. g., we will say, human happiness, then the only way to reach a solution would be to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of science regarding human happiness. My opinion in this case, briefly expressed, would be that science or knowledge (kept, of course, from the masses) can give us more happiness (in the form of physical comfort, or artistic and scientific enjoyment of all kinds) with the moral disadvantages connected with it, than ignorance would give us with a higher moral standard.

This is as much as I care, for the present, to discuss this important topic.

ANTI-PRAGMATISM AND HYPER-PRAGMATISM. — M. Fréd. Paulhan, in a long discussion of the social ideas explained in this volume, suggests in the *Revue Philosophique* of June, 1909, that I am rather *hyper-pragmatist* than *anti-pragmatist*. M. Faguet, in *Idées Modernes* of March, 1909, writes: "And I wish to call attention to the fact that his conclusions are not anti-pragmatic, but, on the contrary, ultra-pragmatic"; Professor Moore in his turn (*Journal of Philosophy*, May 27, 1909) points out that "Professor Schinz's defense of intellectualism is openly (what the pragmatist would insist it must implicitly be) pragmatic in its method," while Professor Dewey (*Philosophical Review*, July, 1909) speaks of the author's "pragmatic suggestion to anti-pragmatists."<sup>1</sup>

Those statements are not altogether incorrect. I am certainly more pragmatic than pragmatists when I carry the "expediency" argument so far as to admit

<sup>1</sup> See also M. G. Compayré in his article in *La Revue (ancienne Revue des Revues)*, Sept. 15, 1909.

that we ought to preach untruth, if untruth is morally useful while truth would be sad and the acquaintance with the latter might discourage or kill resistance to low passions. Yes, this is *Hyper-pragmatism*. Yet the book means *Anti-pragmatism*, too, for the author considers pragmatic theories as merely *socially advisable*; *he never claims that they are true*. The purpose of the first part of the volume is precisely to expose various attempts to persuade us that because some idea is morally useful, it is for this reason true. Philosophers ought not to indulge in the logic of romantic poets, who, finding that life would be too horrible if there was no immortality, infer that *therefore* immortality must be true. Immortality may be true, but the argument of pragmatists and poets has no philosophic value.

## APPENDIX B

### LITERATURE AND THE MORAL CODE.<sup>1</sup>

*"Vérité en deçà des Pyrénées, erreur au delà."*

PASCAL.

Two conceptions possible as to the relations of art and morals, the one æsthetic (art for art's sake), the other didactic (art as a means of promoting a social ideal). The former prevails among Latin nations, the latter among Anglo-Saxons. The didactic point of view implies: 1. that art must adapt itself to the intellectual level of the masses; 2. that our present moral code is final. The first theory is disastrous for art, the second is scarcely maintainable. The Anglo-Saxon point of view is legitimate in that it takes into account the well-being of society, but false in that it ignores the rights of art; while the Latin point of view safeguards freedom of thought at the expense of public morality.

It is useless to try to reconcile these two conceptions; they cannot be reduced to the same terms. But why these differences of conception? Because the circumstances are different. The Anglo-Saxon have only one public, the great public, the popular public, to take into account; the French have two of them, — the popular public and the intellectual public. (Before the Revolution there was only one in France also, the public of the higher class, the "élite.") This difference of publics explains in great part the superiority of the Latin literary class (artists), more favored because freer.

<sup>1</sup> These pages, which discuss a very concrete aspect of the moral and social problems started by the general subject of pragmatism, were first published in the *International Journal of Ethics*, July, 1906, under circumstances indicated in the first paragraph.

Will they always have this advantage? It is doubtful; the flood of democracy sweeps all before it; the Latin peoples will be to-morrow where the Anglo-Saxons are to-day.

It is now some years ago that one or two English authors (allusion is especially made to Pinero and Shaw) put on the stage plays which were strongly censured by the critics of England and America for the freedom which they allowed themselves in discussing moral problems. This is unusual, for it is generally French writers who arouse criticism on that score. The stir created by these plays in Anglo-Saxon countries makes it appear timely to discuss the respective attitudes of Anglo-Saxon and of Latin races in such matters.<sup>1</sup>

No attempt will be made in the present paper to show that one side is right and the other wrong; nor is it intended to offer a compromise. On the contrary, the purpose of this appendix is to show that the two standpoints are not reducible to the same terms, to show why they are bound to clash and why there can be no reconciliation. An attempt will be made to make the problem thus presented better understood.

First of all we must make a clear distinction between the two attitudes — the attitude of literature toward morality, and another which can by no means be identified with it, although one must admit that there is some connection between the two. Some writers maintain that art has its aim in itself; it is the theory of

<sup>1</sup> I use these terms "Latin" and "Anglo-Saxon"; but to whoever has read attentively certain passages in the body of this book, it will be clear that I attach to the words only a geographical meaning without implying by that any belief on my part in a profound influence of races.

art for the sake of art, which is a distinctly Latin ideal. Others, the great majority of Anglo-Saxon writers, maintain that art must be only a means to an end. One ideal is purely æsthetic, the other purely didactic.

But it would be a mistake to infer that Latin writers ignore moral problems, and that art for the sake of art is their only ideal. It would be decidedly erroneous to believe that this is the most common attitude among French artists. All sorts of practical problems are treated as they are in Anglo-Saxon countries, but the difference lies in the way they are approached. The respective positions can be described about as follows: The Anglo-Saxons say that literature must be kept within the limits of the ethical laws that govern us, must insist upon the beauty of those laws, and encourage their observance by the public. The Latins say that literature has no such obligation in treating moral problems.

Let us first examine the Anglo-Saxon standpoint. Eliminating all rhetoric from the discussion, the argument may be summed up as follows: Society rests upon certain moral and social principles which assure order; to suggest doubts as to the excellence of those principles means to shake society to its foundations, to breed disorder and anarchy. The very fact that some persons, thanks to special gifts of nature, hold a position of leadership places upon them increased responsibilities. Authors, therefore, ought not to discuss problems of ethics in such a fashion as to mislead the public. This attitude is perfectly reasonable, but at the same time there are some consequences which must be recognized.

It implies, first, that no art must be cultivated except

that which is accessible to the masses and suited to their intelligence. It should be remembered that the problem of freedom of thought in the treatment of moral questions is a comparatively modern one in art and literature. There was a time when books were not accessible to all as they are to-day. Instruction was the privilege of a few and literature was confined to the educated classes. From the present moral point of view, the literatures of past centuries were much freer than ours. Of course no one in our day would be likely to suffer imprisonment or torture or death for expressing ideas disapproved by political or ecclesiastical authorities; but the restriction now imposed by moral obligations, by what is called "public opinion," is in fact even greater than the physical coercion of past centuries. We are not concerned here with the question whether the present standpoint is better or worse than the old. But that democracy is responsible for the limitation of freedom of speech and thought that hampers modern authors is certain. This is recognized by some of those who have come forward lately protesting against liberty in literature. The writer recently attended a large meeting of one of the important literary clubs in this country, where the chief speaker, a well-known professor of ethics, said that if no protest is made against the too free treatment of certain questions in novels or on the stage, our democracy will be seriously threatened.

The attempt to restrict moral discussion has another *consequence*. It is an assumption that our present moral code is final. Now, in the progress of centuries, as every one knows, ethical standards have changed. Our modern conception of marriage, our duties toward



children, our moral attitude toward inferior races, and so forth, have undergone complete transformation. On what ground, then, can we claim to have reached the definitive truth in those matters? Certainly not on the ground that the practical results are ideal. Let us take the country where modern principles have been allowed most freedom to develop unhampered by traditions — America. As the outgrowth of our conception of marriage we have the fact that the world over America is called the “land of divorce”; as the outgrowth of our conception of civil freedom we have “bossism.” To accept as permanent a social system which yields such results would not be encouraging.<sup>1</sup>

We allow liberty of thought in philosophical, in economic, and in scientific problems, to a certain extent in religious problems, — why this exception in the case of moral problems? What if the idea of the sacredness of the moral code then in existence had been successfully enforced in the time of Socrates, Buddha, Christ, Luther, Wesley, even of Emerson? The moralists who would forbid a perfectly free discussion of such topics as Mr. Bernard Shaw’s plays deal with are concerned first of all with the welfare of modern democracy. They do not discuss literary art; they merely aim to defend democracy against a too free art.

Our conclusion is this: The Anglo-Saxon point of view is *right* in that it takes into consideration our

<sup>1</sup> One might answer that these are not *necessary* results of modern conceptions. This is perhaps true; but then, let other social systems have the benefit of this argument. The cruelty of masters, for instance, is not a necessary result of slavery; in fact everybody agrees that many slave owners were excellent masters. Yet even though they were all good masters, no one would be in favor of slavery again. The same holds good in other cases.

modern social ideals, and *wrong* in that it does not take art into consideration. The problem is not solved; one of its elements is simply denied recognition.

We need not explain at length the Latin point of view, since it is exactly the reverse of the Anglo-Saxon. The French seems to care nothing, or very little, about the immediate consequences of theories expressed in works of art which are within reach of the general public. They act as if the mediocre-minded masses did not exist at all, or as if they ought to be at least wise enough to leave alone what they cannot understand. Therefore, if an author has some valuable idea to propose, whatever it may be, he expresses it regardless of consequences, the result being that it may do a great deal of harm; for some will twist ideas, or quote an author to justify their greed, their lust, their passions.

While the Anglo-Saxon point of view, as we have seen, safeguards public morality at the expense of freedom of art and of thought, the French point of view, *vice versa*, safeguards freedom of thought, sometimes at the expense of public morality.

When once this truth has been fully grasped with its logical consequences in practical life, the contention made in our introductory remarks can hardly be denied, namely, that the two points of view are irreducible, at least as long as the supporters of either remain consistent; for, either you take the ground that views which are socially dangerous should be suppressed, or you recognize the rights of free thought as more important than any moral harm which may result from the expression of such views. In the former case you

necessarily limit the freedom of literature, in the latter you disregard the welfare of modern democracy.

But why is it so? How is it that two countries should adopt such widely different attitudes in their conception of art?

The kind of literature produced will depend greatly, as we have seen, upon what the reading public want; and where there are wide contrasts in culture, education, and social conditions, the public must be different. It is futile to criticize authors from an abstract point of view; their works should be judged with reference to the special public for which they were written.

Now in comparing, for instance, two countries like America and France, one will be struck by this essential difference: in America there is held to be only one general public, while in France this unity does not exist; there is more than one public. It is true that before the Revolution there was only one public for literature, namely, the cultivated public; the mass of the people did not even know how to read or write. But after the Revolution conditions changed; democracy soon created a demand for popular literature and it was supplied. At the same time many authors (Stendhal, Mérimée, and others) objected to lowering literature to the level of social democracy, keeping up the traditions of a literature for an intellectual aristocracy. The struggle continued all through the nineteenth century (think of men like Baudelaire, Barbey d'Aurevilly, Flaubert, Leconte de l'Isle, Villiers de l'Isle Adam). Even after the democratic ideals had conquered in political and social life, a strong protest was made against their acceptance in literature, the group of authors known as "Symbolists" proving

especially fierce in their attacks against the invasion of the bourgeois spirit. Their efforts have not been in vain; as a consequence, there are still in France two literatures: the old, traditional, artistic literature which requires culture on the part of the reader; and popular literature.<sup>1</sup> Writers are not compelled to strike the unhappy medium of mediocrity and remain within the reach of all classes in order to find readers. They generally choose at the beginning of their careers either to write "up" or "down." A sufficient amount of literature is supplied fitted for the masses (exciting slum stories like de Kock's, fighting stories like "The Three Musketeers," love stories like "L'Abbé Constantin"); and others who approach a subject seriously and treat it thoroughly have another public that understands them; of course, a rather small public, the truly educated public.

There are a few sporadic cases of authors of the higher type who are read also by the general public, as, e. g., Zola and Maupassant, whose art in telling stories can be thoroughly enjoyed by people who do not in the least care for, or understand their philosophy, just as the fables of La Fontaine are enjoyed both by children and by the deepest thinkers. Another exceptional case is Victor Hugo; on the one hand his philosophy is commonplace, and on this account he is very popular with the masses while very much despised by professional critics; but on the other hand his admirable mastery of the French tongue wins praise even from the most exacting readers.

<sup>1</sup> I have given a short sketch of the history of this struggle between the two literatures in France since the time of the French Revolution up to our own day in an article in *The Bookman* (New York), November, 1902.

If one comes to look at things from this standpoint, and regards the public, not as a kind of neutral entity, but as a living agent which responds to literature and art according to different degrees of culture and intellectual attainment, the whole problem is transformed. The question cannot be settled once for all from a merely theoretical point of view and *sub specie aeternatis*; the truth is that a work of art — novel, drama, painting, etc. — may be considered excellent in one country and bad in another, and may be judged in like manner with reference to two different publics in the same country. The famous words of Pascal, “Vérité en deçà des Pyrénées, erreur au delà,” cannot yet be used in a purely ironical sense; they express actual condition.

We are not then surprised at the attitude taken in regard to French literature or to the writings of Bernard Shaw by the majority of moralists in America; they read French authors and judge them bad because their books are not suited for the general American public, especially for the masses. But in France the educated portion of society forms a separate circle which allows not only the treatment of topics that would be objectionable for the masses, but a treatment of them from another than the conventional point of view.

When one remembers that nearly all the orthodox views of to-day were once heterodox, it may easily follow that the moral standards held at present will in time give place to others. New conceptions work slowly; but ideas advanced by the educated strata of society gradually filter down to the uneducated. Therefore, in the writer's opinion, an “aristocratie

intellectuelle " is necessary, and in the long run will contribute to the general welfare.

The Anglo-Saxons, in trying to keep from the masses ideas which are not easily understood, admit the existence of a sphere of thought above the comprehension of the general public. They thereby concede the value of an independent élite. It is remarkable that they pay special attention to the higher literature in France, and write about it in papers and periodicals. But an unexpected result is that in this way the literature for the élite in France is brought before the general public in America — for which it was not intended and is not suitable. Hence the severe judgments, from a moral point of view, which are passed upon products of French literature. Such criticisms would be right only if these works had been meant for the general public.

From what has been said, it appears that really good writers in France, because of their freedom to deal with all subjects — even with those that touch the most questionable social relations — are because of their freedom, in an unusually favorable position as compared with writers of some other countries. Among American authors, for instance, literary art, to its disadvantage, is confined to narrower limits. But can it be expected that the favorable conditions that prevail in France will continue? French authors have been complaining bitterly in recent years of the forced "democratization" of literature and art — but especially of literature — that is following closely upon the triumph of democracy in social life. Many have gone so far as to deny the blessings of democracy because they see in the modern conceptions of life the doom of their

artistic ideals, and they are unwilling to pay that price for social progress. To them there is a real incompatibility between art and democracy. In the writer's opinion, however, these protests are useless; to try and stop the formidable wave of democracy is to build a wall of sand against the tides of the ocean. Renan, who was much concerned with this problem, struck what seems to be the most reasonable attitude. He pointed out how idle was the attempt to oppose the inevitable. He thought that the modern social evolution should be allowed to pursue its course without interference. As for the few incorrigible social dreamers and literary idealists, he said they should try to be content without endeavoring to convert the world to their views. If they would leave the world alone they would be left alone in their turn, and might be much happier in their solitude than they think.

In this resignation advocated by Renan there is, no doubt, a note of deep pessimism. One may nevertheless take a more hopeful view. Alongside of the growth of democracy, another tendency, directly springing from it, is gaining ground every day, namely, cosmopolitanism, and in the effects of this tendency will surely be felt in the higher spheres of life as elsewhere. The educated classes of different countries instead of each remaining almost completely isolated should come into closer relations and understanding and assert their vitality and permanence in the moral leadership of the world. In fact, signs are not lacking which indicate a slow movement in that direction.

## APPENDIX C

### COMMON SENSE AND PHILOSOPHY<sup>1</sup>

*“Der gemeine Verstand hat in Sachen der Philosophie gar keine Ansprüche, als die welche jeder Gegenstand der Untersuchung hat vollkommen erklärt zu werden. Es ist nicht etwa darum zu thun, zu beweisen dass wahr sei was er für wahr hält, sondern nur darum die Unvermeidlichkeit seiner Täuschungen aufzudecken.”*—SCHELLING (*System des Transcendentalen Idealismus*).

Philosophy, abandoned for “common sense,” partly because some think we ought to put thought on the level of a demo-

<sup>1</sup> These pages, written in 1897 as an opening speech to a course of lectures upon the History of Positivism before the “Faculté des lettres” of the University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland (and published in the *Revue Philosophique*, Jan., 1900), will not be out of place in this volume.

I had just ended my studies; had sought to come in contact with the great representatives of science of to-day, and it seemed to me that philosophy was hesitating to face the problems with which circumstances made it imperative for it to grapple; that it was seeking excuses not to follow out the route which it was incumbent upon it to follow. A new eclecticism seemed to me to be looming up menacingly on the horizon, not, as three quarters of a century ago, to react against the great transcendental systems of the German thinkers, but to set itself in opposition to the invasion of the scientific spirit. I had taken a stand in opposition to this attitude of reserve, this timid reaction in the name of common sense against the new spirit. But I hardly suspected that at the very moment when I was writing this inaugural lecture in a small university city of French Switzerland, William James — whom I had learned to know as the author of *Psychology* — was beginning to give shape to the essays of his volume, *The Will to Believe*, the first step toward the pragmatism of to-day, and that “pluralism,” a philosophic conception allied to eclecticism,



cratic public and partly because scholars wish to protest against the old metaphysics.

- I. Vanity of common sense trying to solve questions that belong to the sphere of science, such as the animal origin of man. Common sense denying facts (unconscious reasoning); declaring the true to be absurd (rotundity of the earth); contradicting itself (notion of space; relations of cause and effect).
- II. Common sense facing vital problems: the problem of evil; problem of the divine love.
- III. Absurdities promulgated by common sense in the history of human thought. Common sense offers practical and provisional solutions of the problems presented to man; these different solutions contradict one another; common sense never co-ordinates them; a grotesque philosophical chaos results from such attempts. If common sense sufficed to solve the problems, it would never have been necessary for philosophy to be born. Common sense will constantly suggest new problems while putting in line incoherent answers, but never solve any of them.
- IV. Error of the philosophers of the common sense method, — namely, that the same one that does not know and asks (common sense) is the one that professes to answer, hence to know. Solution of the difficulty: common sense asks a reply from science; philosophy appeals from poorly informed reason to better informed reason. Philosophy effects a synthesis of the results of science by verifying the results reached by learned men in the different departments of inquiry, and by comparing them with each other; and little by little building them up into a complete system of knowl-

was going to be systematically formulated by a man of such soaring power and breadth of wing.

But it appears that my unpretending manifesto, the work of a young professor, was a refutation of pragmatism in advance; for pragmatism is the philosophy of common sense. Let me add that certain arguments that I could not allow myself to make in chapters referring to the concrete affirmations of William James and other members of his school, I would naturally offer them at that former occasion, and that therefore *Common Sense and Philosophy* is both a complement of the preceding pages and a résumé of the main problem broached in this volume.

edge; being furthermore aware to-day of the limits of the human reason, it no longer shows a tendency to rise into the sphere of metaphysics.

PHILOSOPHY, as an object of independent study, is passing through a critical period of neglect. It is not even attacked any more. It is barely discussed now and then. It is laid aside like an old sword. Even the name of it is not always respected. Thus in America, where at first, in accordance with English usage, philosophy signified natural science, the word is reserved now for metaphysics; philosophers there are the kind of people who occupy themselves with insoluble and empty problems, or people who balance the world on the point of a pin, or, may be, theologians. To call a psychologist a philosopher is almost an insult.

What has happened? For ages past men have addressed themselves to philosophy for the solution of the problems that lay nearest their hearts; how is it that they suddenly profess they can do without it? The object of philosophy has been much discussed; yet, in a general way, all admit that it seeks to introduce unity into our knowledge and our ideas. Now, there have never before been so many branches of knowledge and so many ideas requiring to be coordinated and subordinated the one to the other, as at the present time. The scientists, busied with their specialties, rarely trouble themselves about this. As Comte and Mill have already said, the specialization of work produces, in this respect, effects that are to be regretted. Imagine a young student of our days face to face with the jumbled and confused edifice of science. Leaving a course in theology, in which he has heard the Children of Israel spoken of according to the tradi-

tional chronology which places the origin of the world at five or six thousand years before Christ, he next attends a course on geology, and there learns that the epoch of the origin of the world must be carried back millions of years; and, finally, at a course in anthropology he learns that the appearance of man himself upon the earth ought probably to be placed a million years back. In a laboratory of chemistry they have told him that the world is composed — or, for the purposes of science, must be conceived as being composed — of elements infinitely small; then in a course on philosophy or logic it is proved to him in the most unequivocal way that the infinitely small, as well as the infinitely great, is inconceivable or unthinkable. A spiritualistic psychologist sets forth and develops the idea of the superiority of mind, which dominates the body and rules it as it pleases: emotion takes possession of us, the body sheds tears; the intellect decides that such or such an action is expedient, the will intervenes and the body obeys its orders. But a physiologist comes along and proves that a man gifted with a large brain, or a brain creased with many crinkled convolutions is more intelligent than a man with a small brain or a brain slightly fretted with grooves; that a man whose body contains a certain quantity of alcohol suddenly loses his reason; that a woman who has no bust and little hair has an irresistible proneness to lubricity; that a man who has passed into the condition of a eunuch becomes a woman in character — in short, that there are no inner states of man that are not the echo of a physical state. Again, a professor of history points out the influence of great individualities upon the course of human affairs, either dedi-

cating a kind of worship to these providential arrivals on the planet, such as Carlyle or Comte, or else cursing them, as Proudhon did Napoleon I, or even reconstructing history, like Renouvier in his *Ouchronie*; but then at the same time an ethnologist or a sociologist affirms that the great personalities of history are only the children of circumstances, that chance favored their greatness. — And so one might go on a long time multiplying illustrations like these and showing that efforts the objects of which should be to convert this chaos into order would be far from useless, and that never have men had so great need of philosophy as to-day.

It is quite true that it is just this state of things that has caused discouragement in many. Amid so many divergent opinions, and data contradicting the reason itself, how open up a road to the truth? Yet men will never willingly remain in doubt, or at least only a very small minority could endure such a state. Our mind is so constituted that it will invent solutions rather than stand before an open problem. Besides, the old dilemma of Aristotle is the echo of a voice that makes itself heard in every person who thinks: "If we must philosophize, why then, we must philosophize; if we ought not to philosophize, we must still philosophize (to demonstrate it); so we must always philosophize." If, then, scepticism is the attribute of very few men, what is it that has taken the place of philosophy? I answer without circumlocution, it is that vague thing called "common sense," which to-day enjoys the authority formerly vested in the greatest geniuses of humanity alone; it is supposed that the reply to so many questions, which is often sought for in regions

remote and often inaccessible, is not so very far from us; it must be within us. Let us only not stifle our reason beneath subtleties and sophisms and it will spontaneously offer us a means of remedying the confusion and embarrassment that philosophers have created by strewing the ground with the débris of former thoughts and beliefs.

The idea of appealing to common sense is not a new one. Socrates did so for the sake of disabusing the Athenians of their errors; and after him the Sophists did the same. Yet it was for them a defensive weapon; they did not make use of it so much for the purpose of constructing a philosophy as for ruining one that seemed to them bad. With certain Encyclopædists (Voltaire at their head), the Scotch and the Eclectics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is different. Common sense is by them clearly and, so to speak, officially declared to be the source of truth. An article by Jouffroy (in his *Mélanges*) bears this very term as title. And to-day (a still more remarkable spectacle) we see philistine and savant wearing the same caps. Of course, it is not exactly the same kind of motives that inspire these two classes of persons. One class replaces philosophy by common sense because, in our democratic age, they experience the need of bringing down to their level what they have been persuaded is accessible to all; the other works by reaction — explicable in some degree, but nevertheless fatal — against a certain philosophic temper that manifested itself in an epoch relatively near our own.

My aim in these pages is to set myself against this dethronement of philosophy, and to protest against a misunderstanding that authorizes any kind of a person

to set up as an impromptu philosopher by arming himself with common sense, like Don Quixote of old with his pasteboard helmet. I believe the enemy to be more dangerous than he appears. If some of my reasonings seem a little too unsophisticated to appear here, my hearers will pardon me when they reflect that common sense cannot be better refuted than by common sense itself.

## I

Common sense, left to itself, settles nothing.

In the first place, there are cases in which the question is solely one of facts; and here it is not even necessary to give examples. Thus, as far as relates to discussions on the age of the globe we inhabit, or the age of the human race, it is evident that no one can dream of solving such problems by common sense alone. They are questions of science; we either know or do not know. Yet it would be a mistake to think that common sense has never shown a desire to intermeddle in the fields of pure science: have we not all heard of very respectable people disposed to reject in the name of "common sense" the somewhat disconcerting assertion that man is descended from the lower animals?

There are questions in which the futility of such an attitude is still more manifest and yet in which common sense has been made to intervene, such as the why and wherefore of the laws of nature. For example here is the law of inertia in physics. It states that movement takes place, first, in a straight line, and secondly, at a uniform rate of speed. Now (says com-

mon sense) if movement takes place in a straight line, it is because the moving object, not having any reason to deviate to one side or the other, naturally keeps on its way in a straight line. Yet the insufficiency of this professed explanation appears at the first glance. In the first place, how do we know whether or not the moving object has a reason for deviating; and, secondly, even if it were proved that it has no reason for deviating, has it, by the same token, any more reason for going in a straight line? A man who is walking without any other end than that of walking, finds himself confronted by three roads, one in front of him, one to the right and one to the left. If he has no motive for taking the right hand road or the left, does it therefore follow that he has one for taking the road that faces him? None — or at the most that of not wanting to take the trouble to turn to the right or the left; but this is just verifying the law of inertia, not explaining it. The existence of the law of inertia is a matter of observation, and the desire to account for it by common sense is illusory. The best proof of it is that before Kepler had laid down this law, the continuation in a straight line of a moving object was by no means admitted to be natural *a priori*. On the contrary, Aristotle deemed the circle to be the simplest and most perfect line; hence his individual common sense — which was certainly not a mediocre one — told him that normal motion was circular motion; and the geometers of to-day are on Aristotle's side.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hobbes was still uncertain whether the straight line or the curved line is the line of normal motion (cf. Tönnies: *Hobbes, Leben und Lehre*, p. 139). The symbolic rôle played by the circle and the sphere in Fröbel's system is well known. With him the sphere is the symbol

The same is true of the second part of the law, uniform movement.

Hence common sense plays a very silly rôle when it professes to account for facts that we can only accept such as nature presents them to us.

There are phenomena in the presence of which common sense realizes its own insufficiency; but as the confession would cost it dear, it executes a flank movement around the difficulty. The duly authenticated facts are simply denied, such as, for instance (in psychology), unconscious or subconscious thought and reasoning. Indeed, the devotee of common sense imagined to turn into ridicule this latest "discovery," or to excommunicate it *ex cathedra* out of science. And yet it is clearly ascertained that we often think and reason without knowing it. People have fallen foul of a word: to reason (they say) presupposes consciousness, and to reason without knowing it is an absurd and contradictory notion. They don't see that in saying this they are affirming what is precisely the point at issue. They *claim* that the ability to reason pertains solely to the conscious mind; they do not prove it. It has become almost a commonplace thing to allude to the convincing experiments upon hypnotized or anæsthetized persons; but let us mention briefly two of the most striking.

A person is trying to think of a word very familiar to him but which he cannot at the moment recall. He has one arm anæsthetized; I mean by that everything that takes place in that arm is foreign to the consciousness. During the investigation you slip a pencil into

of unity; the child must begin by playing with a ball; the cube, which succeeds the ball, is the symbol of diversity in unity.



the anæsthetized hand; the hand will write the word that is sought; when placed before the eyes of the subject he will immediately recognize it.

Another example will show us that not only do we think unconsciously, but that our intellect actually works without our suspecting it. Conceal the anæsthetized hand behind a screen, and by guiding it, cause it to write down figures in a column as if for addition. The conscious subject thus knows nothing of the figures; but ask him to mention any number whatever and he will give you for answer *the sum* of the written figures. What is this if not unconscious calculation? The subject undoubtedly performs a pretty complicated intellectual operation. Common sense may protest as it pleases, it will never make out that what exists does not exist. And I do not even mention the post-hypnotic phenomena, each one of which alone constitutes an irrefutable proof of the existence of our ability to think and will unconsciously.

However, there is no need of going so far afield; we can establish the fact of unconscious reasoning every day and in the case of any person. Many merchants, while adding up their accounts with perfect accuracy, are thinking of all kinds of subjects besides their figures. Everyone who writes without making mistakes in orthography applies incessantly rules of grammar of which he is entirely unconscious at the moment of writing; in many cases you would very much embarrass him if you asked him to state them. In children also one finds numbers of good illustrations. You set down a rule of three: "A merchant buys cloth for 35 francs, receiving for that sum 175 metres; how many metres will he get for 55 francs?"

The child does not understand, and to assist him you propound a similar problem in a simpler form: "If you get three apples for two cents, how many will you get for four cents?" He replies at once, "Six." — "How did you do it?" you then ask. Almost never does the child know how to answer. I have tried this experiment myself a hundred times. The child has solved the problem, but he does not know how. We call this unconscious reasoning. A master trained after the tenets of the current philosophy of common sense will be vexed, will threaten the pupil, punish him, for not performing the same operation with larger figures. It is unjust for all that; for, although the calculation has positively been made, still the child knows nothing of the operations to which he has had recourse; then how ask him to repeat them with other figures?<sup>1</sup>

I pass now to a class of examples in which we shall find common sense showing still more evidently its complete insufficiency; it no longer merely denies the truth, it declares it to be absurd. No one in this day is ignorant of the fact that the earth is not the centre of the universe, nor even of the solar system, and that it is round and inhabited in almost every part.<sup>2</sup> But these facts fly in the face of the most elementary common sense. If you explain clearly to the first child

<sup>1</sup> A similar observation has been made by Morgan, *Introduction to Comparative Psychology*, London and New York, 1896, p. 229. He solves the problem by supposing the intervention of a marginal consciousness. Apart from the words, the point of view of Morgan is the same as mine.

<sup>2</sup> The facts that militate against the theory of Laplace are not to be taken into account here, for they do not touch upon the sphericity of the terrestrial globe. See a few words on these objections in *Certitude Logique*, G. Milhaud, second ed., Paris, F. Alcan, 1898, pp. 104-106.

you meet the consequences of his belief, namely, that at the antipodes men are so situated that relatively to us they hang with head down and feet up, the child will laugh in your face. It is of no use for you to point out that "down" means toward the centre of the earth, and that if you start from there you are rising whatever direction you take, for the relative position of the body sticks in the mind, and common sense continues to rebel against the truth.<sup>1</sup> And let me not to be reproached for selecting the common sense of a child. Common sense is the same everywhere; if it were not so it would no longer be *common* sense. Moreover, I should have no trouble in proving it in the elementary case we are considering:

"Is it possible," cries Lactantius (one of the Fathers especially hostile to philosophers), "that men can be absurd enough to believe that the harvests and the trees hang downward in the empty air on the other side of the earth and that men's feet are above their heads? If you ask them how they prove these monstrous assertions and how it is that objects do not tumble off into space on that other side, they reply that things are so by nature, that heavy bodies tend toward the centre (of the earth), as the spokes of a wheel to the hub, while light bodies, like clouds, smoke, fire, tend from the centre toward the sky in all parts. Now really I don't know what to say of people who, once they have gone astray, obstinately persevere in their *madness*, and bolster up one absurd opinion by another."

This proves, then, that the most serious common sense can brand with madness the most incontestable truth.

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to know that J. J. Rousseau remembered in later life having had this very experience here mentioned; his father, he says, tried in vain to explain to him the problem of the antipodes. (See Ritter, *Famille et Jeunesse de J. J. Rousseau*, pp. 149-150.)

They could not plead anything further than this same *madness*, some centuries later, against such men as Columbus, Vasco da Gama and Magellan.

Let me here indulge further in a short parenthesis, to the effect that those who are fond of appealing to common sense against their adversaries find very little trouble in dispensing with it when the matter in hand is the establishing of their own positions. Thus Saint Augustine, who professes for the partisans of the sphericity of the earth the same scornful pity as Lactantius, among other arguments for the flatness of the earth adds the two following: "It is impossible that there are inhabitants on the other side of the earth since no race among the descendants of Adam is mentioned in the Scriptures as being there." And besides: "At the Judgment Day the men on the other side of the globe could not see the Lord descending through the air."

Common sense has so far explained nothing, or contradicted the facts. I shall now examine whether common sense does not sometimes contradict itself. If it does do so, then unless we admit that truth itself is contradictory, or that there are several truths independent one of the other, we shall be authorized to definitively reject the intrusion of common sense into the fabric of our knowledge.

Let us apply our common sense to the idea of space. Space, considered as a whole, naturally comprises the different parts of space. In other words, add together all the parts of space and you must naturally obtain space in its totality. Suppose, then, that you estimate the parts of space known to you, and the parts beyond,

in cubic feet: space will be a fixed and precise whole, — enormous, if you will, but, after all, a total calculable (by figures) in cubic feet; it will be a finite whole. I do not claim that *we* can measure it; but in itself it is measurable. For if you add one to the other finite quantities, you will always obtain a new finite quantity. Suppose, however, you transport yourself to the confines of this space, the sum total of finite spaces, beyond it what will you find? New space. Try a second, a third contingent of cubic metres, you will still obtain a limit between two spaces, but not a limit of space — and it is impossible for us to think that it can ever be otherwise. It is your common sense that teaches you this, just as a moment ago you said that in adding together finite parts of space you would necessarily obtain a totality of space. So space is finite, — datum of common sense; space is infinite, — datum of common sense. The first position has the same thrust of inexorableness as the second, and the second as the first. Common sense contradicts common sense.

From this contradiction, which springs out of the simple operations of our mind, we get the explanation of the fact, so astonishing at first glance, that certain so-called sophisms, put forth by the philosophers of antiquity, have not yet been refuted. For example, the celebrated argument about the hare and the tortoise, in the writings of Zeno. Before he has got over the last half of the space that separates him from the tortoise, the hare will not have outstripped his rival. Now space, being infinitely divisible, there never will be a last half; the remaining space will always be divisible into two parts. It is impossible to find a sense more “common” than that which dictated this famous

speculation of Zeno; and it is only the people who think that common sense is the "open sesame" to every problem who are astonished that, from Aristotle to Hegel (after whom no one seriously tried, unless we admit as a solution that proposed by M. Renouvier, who declares that what Kant called contradictory is simply incomprehensible), no one has succeeded in refuting Zeno.

Perhaps some one will object that I am exploiting regions of thought too remote from reality. Let me choose, then, a more concrete example; for, even in the most ordinary phenomena, common sense can be caught red-handed in the very act of contradiction. Every phenomena has a cause; that is the law of laws. The cause precedes the effect; such is the datum of common sense. Now how can we know which is cause and which is effect? Evidently (still replies common sense) it only needs that we see which one of the phenomena precedes; it is the cause; the other, the one that follows, is the effect. I rub a match on a box prepared for the purpose; it is lighted; I put my finger to the fire; I experience pain. From this I conclude quite naturally that the cause of the pain is the fire; the cause of the fire the combustion of the match; the cause of the combustion, the chemical preparation, etc., — and not the contrary, that my pain is the cause of the fire, the fire the cause of the rubbing of the match on the box, etc. It seems to common sense that all this is so. But let us take another example. I am a paralytic; I live near enough to a military ground to see and hear from my window the manœuvres of the soldiers; yet the distance is so great that I always see the soldiers manœuvre first and only afterwards hear

the command of the officer. I therefore conclude it is the manœuvre that is the cause, and the voice of the officer is the effect.

Then common sense says, "Get yourself conveyed near to the soldiers and each phenomena will assume its proper place."

"On the contrary, the result will be that my head will be completely bewildered. Am I to believe in the way things take place when I am at my window or when I am right on the drill-ground?"

"In the latter, because the propagation of light is more rapid than the propagation of sound."

"But still, whence shall I derive the information? From experience, doubtless. But is it not by experience that I perceive that the movements of the soldiers precede the voice of the officer? Why should one experience be truer than another?"

"Because your experience is an exception, and all others in the domain of physics invalidate it. Return home and you perceive the movements of the servant following the orders of the mistress of the house; you yourself, if any one asks a service of you, consider your action as the effect and not the cause of the request that has been made of you."

"Granted again. But does it never happen that some one speaks after having seen something, for the purpose of noting a fact? A person perceives a horse passing and says, 'A horse.' I am, of course, allowed to apply this to the officer without spoiling the *vraisemblance*, and I interpret things thus: I see the soldiers manœuvring; the officer marks the evolutions and says 'march!' 'halt!' 'right!' 'left!'"

But enough. Even if it is proved to me that I am

wrong in believing so naïvely in what is only an illusion of my senses, what has been proved after all if not just this, that common sense by itself is absolutely insufficient to pass judgment upon phenomena in a sane and accurate manner?

## II

If it be now granted that there are contradiction in the judgments of common sense, still some one may say that after all these petty contradictions are of little importance. In such cases as that of the last illustration I grant it. Yet it is always vexatious to see people persist in giving their confidence to a guide so untrustworthy especially when they profess to fathom the profoundest human problems in its name. Then again, can one be quite sure that the consequences of the errors prompted by common sense are never dangerous? It would be rather strange if it were limited to self-deception in questions of secondary importance. A continuation of the investigation I have begun will reveal the circumstance that, as a matter of fact, the voice of common sense may in certain cases be singularly distracting when men trust themselves to it. Philosophers are sometimes accused of flinging out into the world revolutionary theories. Let us admit the fact; but it is equally true that in trusting ourselves to common sense we shall reach conclusions that may give points to the most dangerous doctrines that have ever been enunciated by the most daring speculators.

It cannot be denied that it is common sense that lays down the problem of the freedom of the will, first



affirming it and then denying it with irresistible force. Now it has been shown profusely that this is not a question of slight importance. Even philosophers most convinced of the truth of determinism have in this matter (with few exceptions) made a concession to common sense by slipping freedom into their system by some secret door and masking it more or less skilfully under the guise of determinism. As a matter of fact, what becomes of ethics? What becomes of the idea of responsibility? What is sin?—I commit a fault, I steal; why? “On account of a propensity for it,” replies common sense. Whence do I get this propensity? From my character. And this comes from where? “From God,” instantly replies common sense; or rather, I cannot make God responsible for my wicked act, I get my character from my parents through heredity. “But whence do my parents get it?” says common sense once more. “From their own parents —” and so on, back as far as the first man. Who created the first man? “God,” says common sense; or else it says, “Why did Adam sin? Was he not free not to do so?” But that is the very question. God did not want him to sin, you say; in that case was it not God’s part to create him strong enough to resist the temptation? . . . The partisans of common sense may well despair, but above all let them not forget to make responsible for this *impasse* that common sense which they reproach philosophers so energetically with not sufficiently respecting.

I have just spoken of God. In our day it is quite often the theologians who invoke common sense with the most thorough conviction. I shall therefore choose a second example in the domain of religion. Ac-

according to common sense, God is the being who possesses the highest perfections; in one word he is Love, which means he is good by nature, he cannot help being good; and if he were not, we should not worship him. "But," says common sense, replying to itself, "if God cannot help being good, if he is good by nature, what merit is there in that? or, rather, is this any longer being good? The sheep is also gentle by nature; do we admire this quality in it as a merit for which it deserves great credit? Or, inversely, do we find the tiger to blame because he is cruel? On the contrary; if he were not cruel he would not be a tiger. Then what does the divine goodness turn out to be? Every one of us, according to this reckoning (that is, if we could not possibly do any wrong), would be the most perfect being imaginable. Hence, also, if we human beings sometimes do a good act which cost us a good deal, we do more than God, better than God, we are better than he. — Who of us has never thought of this? It is so simple! In this case you forbid yourself to think what you consider a blasphemy. But can you do so long? And if, in spite of yourself, these thoughts drift into your mind anew, is it common sense that will banish them forever? No, because here again it is precisely common sense that has introduced them and given them shape.

Were they really much inferior to our shallow modern rationalists, we ask ourselves, — those early fathers of the Church when they stoutly affirmed their *Credo etsi absurdum*, made more emphatic by Tertullian in his *credo quia absurdum?* . . . *Mortuus est Dei Filius, credible est quia ineptum est; et sepultus resurrexit, certum est quia impossibile est?* . . .

## III

I hope, after what precedes, that without fear of being too presumptuous, I may venture to declare that common sense is incapable of solving the questions we ask when face to face with reality. Even from my illustrations, and especially the last ones I made use of, we may draw the conclusion that common sense, so far from solving problems, propounds new ones, and that, too, in the clearest and most ineluctable way. To obstinately persist in sticking to common sense is to condemn oneself *a priori* to dwell eternally *before* the problems without ever becoming master of them. It is not common sense that discovered in the sphere of natural philosophy that fire, water, earth, and air are not elements, but composite bodies; it is not common sense that discovered that the sun does not revolve around the earth, but that the contrary is true; and it is not common sense that will ever give an explanation of unconscious thought; and, finally, it is not common sense that will ever solve the old strangling problem *of* free will, and so many others of a like importance. In all these realms of thought it is only stupid, and neither Darwin nor Lombroso, nor even Nietzsche, will ever be refuted if we oppose to them only this everlasting common sense. It is indeed passing strange that any one should ever have conceived the idea of appealing to it. What does such an appeal mean if not that the reason of a child or an ignorant person is by nature empowered to pass judgment on the results of the researches of all the choicest minds

that humanity has produced? For, what really is common sense? It is the child that strikes the piece of furniture against which it has stumbled; it is the savage who worships the river that fertilizes his fields, or the sun that ripens his crops; it is the great oriental monarch who scourges and fetters with chains the ocean that has the audacity not to comply with his caprices as absolute autocrat.

And if you observe common sense at work in the domain of science, it reveals itself as not less superficial. It is Anaximmes who asserts that the air is the vital principle, for if you place your hand over a man's mouth to hinder him from breathing, life departs. Or it is Heraclitus who claims that fire is the fundamental element of all things, the dry state being preferable to the humid state, as appears from the fact that a man overcome by wine loses his reason. Common sense is Chrysippus, the stoic, denying that the brain is the seat of the soul; it must be the breast for the voice that gives outward expression to the thought, issues from the breast and not from the head. It is Epicurus who will have it that the stars are exactly of the same size they appear to be, on the plea that if distance diminished their size it would also diminish the intensity of the light. It is the grave and immortal Lucretius, who, in order to account for the lion's fright at the crowing of the cock, thinks that, from the body of the latter atoms are given off, which, entering the lion's eye, cause it such acute pain that its courage quails. It is Sextus Empiricus who classes rats among animals produced by spontaneous combustion, because they come out of the ground; so likewise frogs are generated out of the mud, and worms from the dung-

heap; and, finally, bees are produced in the same way from the carcasses of lions or from the carrion of horses. Common sense is Pliny, holding it to be certain that gold and the diamond, being substances of equal value, must be found in the same regions of the earth. It is perchance Origen, who reveres the obscurity of the Bible, the apostles having made it so on purpose, "so that studious men and lovers of wisdom who should come after them would have to buckle hard to their task and find in it the inspiration for their flashes of genius." It is even a Galileo, who affirms that, if water rises in the pump it is because nature abhors a vacuum. Again (to come down to recent times) common sense is pastor Sack, of Berlin, who thinks that if cherries don't grow in winter it is because we don't like them so well in the cold season; and that if grapes fail to ripen before autumn it is for the reason that the new wine would be spoiled by the heat of summer. It is even Hegel himself, who, having established his quaternary system of the planets, declares the earth to be the most perfect of the group to which it belongs, because it alone is accompanied by a satellite, etc., etc.

Finally, as I mentioned at the start, men have even tried to construct formal systems of philosophy on common sense. Reid and his disciples and successors have pitifully failed. This was fairly to be expected. If common sense sufficed to settle all problems, there never would have been any philosophy; there would have been no need of it; problems bringing reason into conflict with reason could never have appeared. The mere fact of the possibility of a philosophy condemned at the very start the strange undertaking of Reid. This accounts for the fact that philosophy of

"common sense" was soon transformed into eclecticism. It was Cousin in France who bestowed on his country this bastard thing which only gets from philosophy the name, and the echoes of which reverberate to this day in books, possibly eloquent books, but in which there is not a spark of the critical spirit that is the father of philosophy. In fact, eclecticism is the philosophy of opportunism; that is to say, a philosophy which can arrive only at casual truth. Moral freedom seems necessary to us, in order to account for the phenomena of the moral consciousness, the voice of duty and the sentiment of responsibility. Very well; you affirm moral freedom. But you have nothing to do with this freedom if the matter in hand is, for example, the punishing of a wrongdoer; for if he is obliged (in the strict sense of the word) to preserve his freedom of choice in the face of all the different motives to action that present themselves to his mind, the motives that you adduce for his doing right can never, without clashing with your hypothesis, influence him more forcibly than any other. Hence your work is in vain. You may possibly punish an individual for a past fault, but can never do anything to prevent him, when given over to his own devices, from lapsing again into the old fault. Very well again; we will discuss subjects relating to the treatment of wrongdoers (and in general every question of education) by starting with the assumption of moral determinism.

The idea of the finite is indispensable in science in order to conceive of physical phenomena under the form of laws; without this idea of finiteness any kind of natural philosophy is impossible. Hence the uni-

verse must be regarded under the concept of the finite. On the other hand, in metaphysics, the infinite is the first condition for speaking of the absolute; you must therefore declare the universe infinite. To be obliged to accept contradictory data — such will undoubtedly be the fate of every philosophy which asks the help of common sense to remove the difficulties caused by the different notions or data of plain reason. Common sense governs its actions in accordance with the factors that are immediately within its scope, and examines every problem on its own merits and as if it were independent of all the phenomena with which it is not directly connected.

Common sense is thus a kind of practical sense, which, in every occurrence, succeeds in narrowing its inquiry in order to find a solution appropriate to the special case. In virtue of this it may evidently be a very useful thing, but it none the less begets a merely provisional philosophy or science. Now a perfect science, a science in the proper sense of the word, is one that takes account of *all* the phenomena conjointly and simultaneously. It cannot be restricted to certain phenomena independently of others without being unfaithful to its mission. Voltaire, who has all sorts of good reasons for speaking respectfully of common sense, is none the less compelled to recognize that it has not a very profound intrinsic value. "Common sense," he says in his *Philosophical Dictionary*, "means simply good sense, coarse common reason, the beginning of reason, the first notion of ordinary things, an intermediate state between stupidity and genius (*esprit*). 'That man has not common sense' is a gross insult. 'That man has common sense' is also

an insult; it means that he is not wholly stupid and that he yet lacks what we call *esprit*."

We must never forget three things:

First, that truth is *one*.

Second, that the solutions of concrete questions are always derived from the solutions of more general problems. It is, on the whole, a profound mistake of the partisans of common sense to pretend that they appeal to common sense only: they really appeal to a superficial and confused science which they have acquired, and to which they unconsciously trust. Whether this science comes to them from their education, their environment, or otherwise, matters little. Jouffroy, who does not seem to me to have contributed much to illuminate the question, nevertheless, in his article on the subject has given this very accurate definition: "Common sense is nothing more than a collection of solutions of the questions that trouble philosophers; it is therefore another philosophy anterior to philosophy properly so called, inasmuch as it occurs spontaneously in the ground-work of all minds, independently of any scientific research on their part." (*Mélanges*, 1838, p. 145.) Common sense, then, itself speaks in the name of this anterior philosophy or this anterior science. Hence, if it really wishes to claim some value, these foundation principles — which it does not establish, but takes for granted — must themselves be safe from all criticism. For instance, if some one asks us to decide between two types of men, as to which acts in accordance with truth, — the one who rejoices at the birth of a child or the one who in the same circumstances laments, we shall, of course, decide in accordance with common sense; but common sense



will itself reply according to the reply to an anterior problem, — the problem of what life is worth, and which for yourself you consider as settled; and it is because you consider the former as settled that you can reply to the latter according to what you call your common sense; the former problem being solved by different nations in a diametrically opposite way, common sense will also produce opinions diametrically opposite. Just so far, then, as Jouffroy is right in his definition, so far is he wrong when (in conformity, by the way, to the school to which he belongs) he claims that common sense and truth are always identical. To make this acceptable, two contrary opinions would have to be true at the same time.

Thirdly, neither must we forget when it is desired to appeal to common sense, that, if problems can be separated theoretically, it is otherwise with reality. Hence, so long as you allow yourself to be guided in each special case, by common sense, philosophical conflicts are inevitable. Doubtless you may in one chapter on ethics develop the idea of duty which calls for the sacrifice of your happiness, and, in another the idea that man always seeks his own happiness and always finds it in the fulfilling of duty. You may, I say, theoretically solve the relations of duty and happiness in these two diametrically opposite ways. All you have to do is to forget in one chapter what you have said in another. But philosophically you cannot employ both the principles at once. It remains that either duty is the renouncement of happiness, or that duty is the means of happiness. It is in vain for you to say that there is real happiness and imaginary happiness; you are forced to recognize that there is only

one true and it is about that that you must speak. In the same way, if you distinguish between temporal happiness and eternal happiness, one only is happiness in the positive sense of the word, and you would contradict yourself, if embodying two different ideas at the same time in the same term, you should adopt now one meaning and now another, according to the convenience of the discussion. In natural history it is the same. Suppose you agree that there is a qualitative difference between the animal kingdom and the vegetable kingdom; theoretically you may very properly assign the protozoa to a course in botany; and another professor can just as conveniently present them in a course on zoölogy; the protozoa have the characteristics of each kingdom. But if there is a real difference between the two kingdoms; that is to say, if a vegetable is not an animal, and *vice versa* if an animal is not a vegetable, the same individual cannot be both at the same time. In the history of science we have a famous example of this process in the astronomical system of Tycho Brahe, who tried to unite in one system the Ptolemaic doctrine and the Copernican doctrine of the relative motions of the earth and the sun.

#### IV

But it is now time to make a remark that doubtless the reader has long ago made on his own account. If it be agreed that common sense settles nothing; that, on the contrary, it incessantly gives rise to new problems, and, if we listen to it, it gets us into more inextricable confusion, how is it then with philosophy? —

for, as a matter of course, it is this we are thinking of putting in the place of the *caput mortuum*. What is common sense after all but simply reason? and to what do we wish to appeal in the search for truth if not to reason? Hence if the common sense—or the reason, since they are one—pitifully fails, is not philosophy condemned to precisely the same fate when it puts its shoulder to the wheel in its turn?

It is true that reason and common sense are not very different from each other, and that even if we reserve the word “reason” for scientists, and “common sense” for the argumentation of the masses, still common sense, more exempt from prejudice in many things than is the thought of the most conscientious scientist, often reasons more accurately than the reason itself. To conclude, then, it must be true—how shall we escape from this result?—that philosophy will become bankrupt as well as common sense; *but only so*, however, if what is asked of her is a response to the problems the existence of which she herself, or common sense, has revealed to us in so imperious a way. But indeed perhaps such response is not at all what philosophy pretends to give. We only seek for something when we have not got it ourselves. In case we already possess it there is no need of any search. And here I put a finger right on the error of the method extolled by the philosophers of common sense. With them the last-named function of the mind must play at the same time the rôle of asker and answerer. Now this is illogical—I hope that common sense itself will grant that,—that the same faculty that knows not and asks, should pretend to reply,—that is, to know.

Philosophy must take care not to fall into the snare laid for her by reason, in whose name she acts. "*Philosophia non ipsa sapientia* (said Lactantius, who, thinking to deal a mortal blow at philosophy, only expressed a fact which does not in the least disturb us); *sed quaerit sapientiam*." Once more, then, if philosophy does seek the truth, it is to say clearly enough that she does not pretend to offer it to anybody.

But from whom shall she seek it? From science; or rather, from the different sciences. If common sense deceives herself, it is because she appeals to the partial and imperfect science that individual men possess; it is this science that must be corrected and completed. And for the sake of clearness, I remark that in science I put psychology, ethics, æsthetics, even the theory of knowledge and logic. It is the relics of an old-fashioned terminology and method of thought that make us generally consider the just mentioned four sciences as species under the genus philosophy. Every science has a precise object, a separate and limited domain of truth to investigate. And such is certainly the case with psychology, ethics, æsthetics, and logic. If we insist on regarding these as branches of philosophy, then mechanics, botany, and physiology have as good a right to the title. The meaning that I commend for the word "philosophy" is the one that long prevailed in former centuries; namely, that philosophy has no special object, she aims at the truth in its ensemble. It is not proper, however, to identify philosophy with a universal science of which the separate sciences should only be parts. In that way we should fall into the error pointed out in the case of the common sense philosophy: philosophy would be seeking

what it already possessed. Thus conceived, moreover, it would be destined to exist only in a far-removed and very problematical future, when nature would have for us no further problem.

## V

The rôle of philosophy, as I figure it out, may be defined in the following way:

1. It creates science, in so far as it shows its necessity. Indeed, while stating problems — and we have seen that it need not take much trouble to do so — the reason asks for their solution. Philosophy and science had the same origin in point of time. This is but natural, since the latter's task was the elucidation of the enigmas propounded by the former. So in ancient times the philosopher and the man of science were generally one and the same. But a moment was to come when this task would be beyond the powers of science. In her domain one problem solved would bring on others the difficulty and number of which would go on ever increasing. Science, which had to correspondingly divide up her powers, demanded the entire attention of man, while the task of philosophy was correspondingly extended and complicated.

2. Philosophy has to bring to bear a large part of her energy in removing everything which is of such a nature as to trammel the progress of science, either in blocking its road or in contesting its positive results in the name of prejudices, or in introducing elements which, so far from explaining, on the contrary hinder its progress toward the truth. Philosophy, following

out the same line of thought, must also set aside without ceremony a certain number of problems which at the very start we can declare to be insoluble by the knowing faculties with which we are endowed. Although logically this is one of the first functions she has to perform, yet philosophy did not acquire a knowledge of this part of her activity until after all the others. This can be very naturally explained, however; the insoluble enigmas are the greatest, and are also the first that human reason will propose to solve. He solves them in a very gross way; then he corrects his explications as fast as necessity requires, up to the time when he sees that contradictions, far from disappearing, keep ever accumulating. It is only after centuries of trial that he gives up, and that at last (with Kant) he gets so far as to demonstrate that they are *a priori* insoluble; that is to say, that the contradiction lies in the laws of thought itself.

3. Philosophy examines the explanations that scientific men hand over to us in response to the problems given them and declares whether they are satisfactory or not. They are frequently found to be in disagreement with reality. It is then the part of the philosopher to dismiss them and declare their attempt at reply to be null and void. It happens none the less frequently that an explanation made in a certain department of science is in conflict with an explanation made in another department of science. In this case again, the learned investigator, being wholly absorbed in the special study he is pursuing, it falls to the philosopher to intervene and point out to each worker the objection with which he is confronted in consequence of the discoveries of his competitor. The same duty is his, in

the case of a single department when the results of special researches are irreconcilable.

Furthermore, the rôle of philosophy is not always purely negative, as might seem to be the case after what has been said. It frequently happens that philosophy is in a position to determine the cause of the conflict, or even to prevent possible disputes between savants. Her constant object is this: to direct scientific activity and put on the right road the science that is going astray.

4. Finally, in virtue of its independent position and its task of collecting all the replies of science, and comparing them first with reality and then with each other, philosophy encounters still another piece of work of considerable value, — that of drawing attention to the close relations possible between two departments of human thought which frequently seem strangers to each other, and in which, in consequence of the specialization of scientific work, each had lost sight of the other. Thus it is the intervention of philosophy that has brought about the close union between the science of the law and alienists in medicine; it is philosophy also who has effected, and not without difficulty, considering the prejudices she had to conquer, that working alliance, so powerful and fertile in results to-day, between physiology and psychology.

To sum up all in a sentence, philosophy is coming to the aid of science in her laborious task of parturition. Socrates practised obstetrics upon individuals; philosophy, better aware of her powers to-day, and conscious of the grandeur of science, is practising upon the latter this delicate art. In this way (and not like the *Σοφία* of Valentinian gnosticism, which is consumed

with love for the *βυθός*, or abyss, and, seeing her passion unreturned, absolutely desires to give birth to a child all alone, and ends by bringing into the world an *ἐκ τῶμα* or shapeless abortion) — in this way, I repeat, philosophy may hope to arrive some day at the solution of the very problems that have given birth to herself. In other words, our entire investigation may be expressed thus: philosophy appeals from poorly informed reason to better informed reason.

Comte, in the first lecture of his *Cours de philosophie positive*, has written a page which I beg to recall to your memory:

"Let there be a new class of scientists," he says, "prepared by a suitable education, who, without giving themselves up to the special cultivation of any particular branch of natural philosophy, shall occupy themselves solely in considering the different positive sciences in their present state, in determining the precise spirit of each of them, in discovering their relations and their concatenation, in summing up, if possible, all their individual principles in a less number of common principles, while always conforming to the fundamental maxims of the positive method. At the same time, let the other scientists, before giving themselves up to their respective specialties, be henceforth fitted by an education acquired with reference to the ensemble of the positive branches of knowledge, to at once profit by the light diffused by those savants who are devoted to the study of generalizations, and to mutually correct the results of their labors, — a state of things to which the scientists of our time are visibly approximating from day to day. . . . With a distinct class, ever checked or controlled by all the others, the special and permanent function of which would be to relate each new special discovery to the general system, we should have no longer to fear that a too great attention bestowed on details would ever hinder the perception of the whole" (pp. 27, 28).



All this is excellent, and Comte himself magnificently illustrated it in the six volumes of *Cours de philosophie positive*. It is not just that the scientists themselves should be burdened with a task that grows heavier every day; they have enough to do in their own special domain. Only, Comte is wrong in speaking of a *new* class. He wrongly saw in his predecessors only obstinate metaphysicians, and judged them too much without studying them; true philosophers have only become very rare for quite a while. But Fichte, in several of his more important treatises, and Hegel and Schelling everywhere (to select the most incriminated) were neither more nor less than philosophers of the exact kind dreamed of by Comte. Schelling above all, is remarkable from this point of view. His aim was always to reach a grand synthesis of the different branches of human knowledge. Doubtless questions of metaphysics are more resolutely shunned to-day. For a long time now we have not seen a complete synthesis, a rounded-out system; but it is not because unity in the domain of thought has been given up, but only because it is not considered that it can be so easily attained; it is not by choice, but by necessity.

Let us here call to mind that there are many more chances of impartiality in the results, if we secure this special class of philosophical scientists, since the temptation to give more credit and weight to one class of facts than to another is in this way avoided. Moreover, a disinterested philosopher has more chance of gaining general confidence than have specialists,—particularly in our day, when, it must be admitted, that while vigorous and profound thought is more frequently found on the side of the natural sciences, often

destructive arguments are upheld by specialists in these branches of knowledge in a manner rather intimidating to those who do not ordinarily move in their sphere. Scientific men themselves should joyfully welcome the restoration of this class of workers. It is easy to understand their prejudice against philosophers, who, during centuries, have held them in check. But is there anything less scientific than to repulse the speculations of the philosophers of the future on the plea that those of the past (formed, too, under very different conditions) are not up to the mark of the scientific acquirements of to-day?

# INDEX

- ABBOTT, LYMAN, 216  
 Adler, Felix, 137, 150  
 Agnosticism, 218  
 American mind analyzed (its pragmatism), 115-123  
*Arabian Nights*, 248  
 Aristocracy of the intellect *v.* democracy, Part III, Chap. 2.  
  
 BACON, LORD, 169  
 Bayle, 174, 175  
 Bary, 135, 239; his book on *Religion in Society in the United States*, 133  
 Bentham, Jeremy, 190  
 Bergson, H., 39, note  
 Bertaud, 262, 266  
 Bible, The, 138, 142  
 Boutroux, Émile, 23, note; 81, note; 221  
 Bradley, 161  
  
 CARUS, Dr., 255  
 Caste, 232  
 Catholicism, reaction toward (the "Oxford movement"), 192, 193  
 Compayré, M. G., 255, note; 267, note  
 Condillac, 181  
 Conscience, 129  
 Consciousness, marginal, 290, note  
 Converse, Mr., Pres. Baldwin Locomotive Works, 144, 145  
*Credo quia absurdum*, 168-172  
 Creighton, Prof. J. E., 36, 37; 44, note; 61, note; 85, note; 255  
  
 D'AVENEL, Viscount, 214  
 Democracy an absurdity, 223, and Part III, Chap. 2, *passim*; on trial, 234-236  
  
 Descartes, 169  
 Dewey, Prof. John, 29, note; Chap. 2, *passim*; 253, note; 267  
 Dogmas, religious, 133-136  
 Draper, J. W., 217, 218, note  
 Durkheim, Émile, 105  
  
 EDUCATION, pseudo, 243, 244  
 Élite, The American, defined, 114, 115  
 Emerson, 216  
*Émile*, 178  
 Ethical Culture Societies, 30, note; 136, 137  
 Ethics, 128  
  
 FAGUET, M., 267  
 Families, small size of cultivated American, 213-215  
 Fichte, 186  
 Fouillée, Alf., quoted, 128  
 Foxes' tails, 83  
 France, intellectual aristocracy of, 230, 232  
  
 GAILLORD, Mrs., 141, 142  
 Ghent (socialist), 237  
 God, a punitive, 152, 155-157; asked to show his credentials, 201  
  
 HARRIMAN, 115  
 Hartmann, Von, 187  
 Hébert, Marcel, 23, note; 66, 251  
 Hegel, 186  
 Heliocentric theory, 44-48  
 Hibben, Prof. J. G., 43, note; 52, note  
 Hindooism and Buddhism, 83, note

- Hobbes, 169  
 Hoeffding, H., 81, note  
*Homo homini lupus*, 127  
 Hugo, Victor, 230-233; 276  
 Hume, 170
- INGERSOLL, R. G., 217, note  
 Irwin-King, 71-73, 76
- JOHNSON, Dr. SAMUEL, 63  
 James, William, The typical pragmatist and protagonist of pragmatism, 78-79 note; his anthropomorphism (idea of God), 81-83, 86; *Social Value of the College-bred*, quoted, 122; his personal religion, 152; on religion in general, 152-159; as a psychic researcher, 193; on democracy, 234; biographical notes on, 238-252; a pragmatist in the superior sense of the word, 247; the difference between his philosophy and the author's stated in a nut-shell, 249  
 James Henry, cited, 238
- KELVIN, Lord, 193  
 Kant, 184, 185, 187, 195, 196
- LALANDE, A., 23, note; 71, 72  
 Leibnitz, 183  
 Le Roy, 43, note; 163, 164  
 Levy-Brühl, L., 105-107  
 Locke, quoted, 63
- MACKAY-SMITH, Bishop, 234, note  
 Materialism, 155, 218; scientific, 118  
 Meliorism of James, 48, 83, 120, 121  
 Moore, Professor, 253, note; 264, 267  
 Münsterberg, Professor, 244
- NAVILLE, A., 106, note; 266  
 New Hampshire, religion in, 149; statistics of, 214, note  
 New York City, religion in, 137-147

## OPPORTUNISM, 47-49

- PANIC of 1907 in Wall Street, 139-147  
 Papini, Giovanni, 24, 51, 78-79, note; 125-127  
 Pascal, 171-173  
 Paulhan, M. Fréd., 267  
 Peirce, Charles, founder of modern pragmatism, 23, note; 108  
 Persuasive ideal, 128  
 Phelps, Professor, 142  
 Philadelphia, religion in, 146, 147  
 Philosophers, how they all compromised with pragmatic scholasticism, 168-173  
 Philosophy and science not always applicable to life, 242 ff.  
 "Pluralism," 119  
*Pluralistic Universe*, A., 73  
 Poe, Edgar, 231  
 Poincaré, Jules Henri, 39, 40, 43 and note; 45  
 Pragmatism, definitions of, 23, 24; main principles of, Chap. I, *passim*; its pretensions, 53; limits of, 57; and intellectualism contrasted, 52-61; and Berkeleyism, 79-81; its great stronghold is America, 111 ff.; American, 115-123; English, 123-125, 159-162; Italian, 125-127; German, 182-187; as ally of theology, 162; is the product of a philosophic temperament, 163; as modern scholasticism and the *ancilla theologiae et ecclesiae*, 166 ff.; making a servant of philosophy, 194; and science, 197; come to stay, 208; not a question of race-stocks, 209  
*Pragmatism and The Will to Believe* compared, 68, 69  
 Pragmatists, the three main arguments of, 23-31; reference to list of, 39, note; scientific and ethical, 62-66, and Chap. II, *passim*; their profession of faith, 182

- Pratt, J. B., 257  
 Pratt, Professor, 263, note  
 Pratt, Sereno S., 139-141  
 Princeton University, 147, note  
 Protagoras, 54  
 Psychic research, inspired by pragmatism, 193  
 Ptolemaic system, 44-48  
 Punitive God, A, 152
- "QUICK Service for Business Men," 143
- RACE suicide, 213-215  
 Religion in America, 130-147;  
   needed as a sanction, 130-151;  
   in Wall Street, 139-147; in  
   Philadelphia, 146; in New  
   Hampshire, 149; not moribund,  
   217  
 Rod, Edouard, 134  
 Rousseau, Jean Jacques, 62, 176-  
   182; 291, note
- SABATIER, 134  
 Schelling, 186  
 Schiller, G., xi, xvii, note; Chap. I,  
   *passim*; 30, note; vindicates the  
   "rationality of irrationalism,"  
   50, note; 123, 159-162, 258-  
   262  
 Schopenhauer, 186, 187  
 Seth, Professor, 255  
 Shaftesbury, 175  
 Small, Prof. A. W., 115  
 Spencerianism, 118, 119  
 Spinoza, 170  
 Stephen, Leslie, 212, note
- THEODICY, the new Jacobean,  
   202-204  
 True, the, 238  
 Truth, 120  
 Truths, the author's system of two,  
   250, 251
- UNITARIANISM, 136, note  
 Universities, American, 130, 131,  
   note  
 Utilitarianism, 190, 191
- WALL STREET and the Panic of  
   1907, 139-145  
 White, Andrew D., 217, note  
 Whitman, Walt, 231  
*Will to Believe, The*, 68, 69  
 Wolf, 183
- ZENO, antinomies of, 174















